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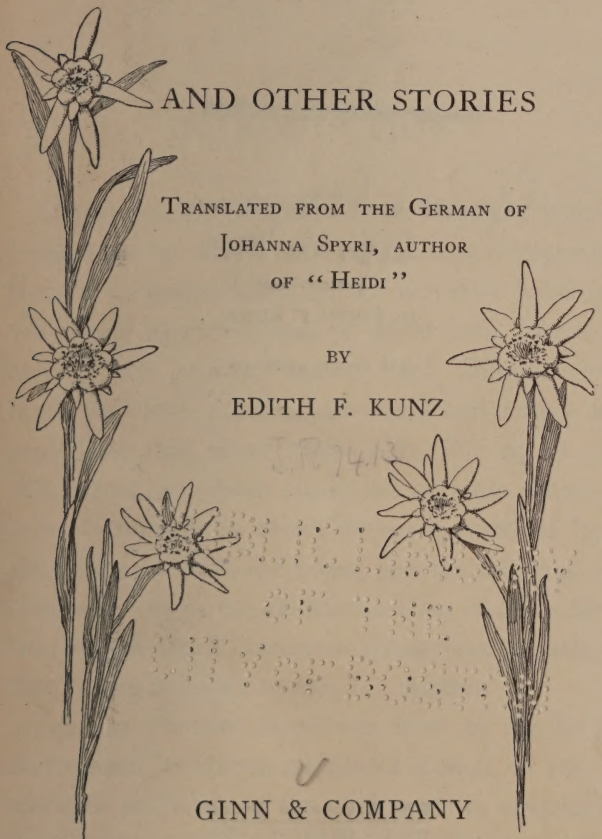
MONI THE GOAT BOY

AND OTHER STORIES

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF
JOHANNA SPYRI, AUTHOR
OF "HEIDI"

BY

EDITH F. KUNZ



GINN & COMPANY
BOSTON · NEW YORK · CHICAGO · LONDON

SCHOOL BOOK COLLECTION

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Apr. 12. 1912

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The Athenæum Press
GINN & COMPANY · PROPRIETORS · BOSTON · U.S.A.

INTRODUCTION

Outside of the province of the Märchen, which constitutes so rich a field in German literature, there is no writer better known or better loved in the young German-speaking world than Johanna Spyri. Her stories, written "for children and those who love children," are read and reread as something that never grows old. The secret of this charm lies, above all, in the author's genuine love of children, as shown in her sympathetic insight into the joys, the hopes, and the longings of childhood, and in her skillful selection of characteristic details, which creates an atmosphere of reality that is rare in books written for children.

Johanna Heusser Spyri was born in the little Swiss town of Hirzel, canton of Zürich, in 1827, and died in Zürich in 1901. She wrote especially for young people, her writings dealing mostly with

Swiss mountain life and portraying the thrifty, industrious nature of the people. The stories are sometimes sad, — for the peasant's life is full of hardships, — but through them all a fresh mountain breeze is blowing and a play of sunlight illumines the high Alps.

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MONI THE GOAT BOY

MONI THE GOAT BOY

CHAPTER I

MONI IS HAPPY

The baths of Fideris lie halfway up the mountain side, overlooking the long valley of the Prättigau. After you leave the highway and climb a long, steep ascent, you come first upon the village of Fideris, with its pleasant green slopes. Then, ascending still higher into the mountains, you at length come upon the lonely hotel building in the midst of rocky cliffs and fir trees. Here the region would indeed be rather dreary looking were it not for the bright little mountain flowers that shine forth everywhere from the low grass.

One pleasant summer evening two ladies stepped out from the hotel and ascended the narrow footpath

that runs up steeply from the house to the rugged cliffs above. On reaching the first peak the visitors stopped and looked about, for they had but recently come to the resort.

"Not very cheerful up here, is it, auntie?" said the younger of the two, as she surveyed the scene. "Nothing but rocks and fir trees, and beyond, more rocks and firs. If we are to spend six weeks here, I wish we might have some pleasanter prospect."

"I 'm afraid it would not add to your cheerfulness, Paula, if you should lose your diamond pendant up here," replied her aunt, as she fastened Paula's velvet neck ribbon from which the sparkling cross hung. "This is the third time I have tied it since we came. I don't know whether the fault is in yourself or in the ribbon, but I do know that you would be sorry to lose it."

"No, no," cried Paula; "I must not lose the cross! No, indeed! It is from grandmamma and is my dearest treasure."

She added two or three knots to the ribbon herself to make it secure. Suddenly she raised her head attentively and exclaimed: "Listen, listen, auntie! that sounds like something really jolly."

From far above came the notes of a merry song; occasionally there was heard a long, echoing yodel, then more singing. The ladies looked up, but no

living creature was to be seen. The winding path, turning in great curves between rocks and bushes, was visible only in patches. But presently it seemed all alive, — above, below, wherever parts of it could be seen, — and louder and nearer came the singing.

"Look, look, auntie! There, there! see!" cried Paula in great delight, as three, four, five goats came bounding down, and behind them others and still others, each one wearing a little tinkling bell. Running along in their midst came the goat boy, singing the last lines of his song:

"The winter is cold,
But who would be sad?
For spring will return
To make the world glad."

With an echoing yodel the boy finished his song, and skipping along meanwhile in his bare feet as nimbly as his goats, he presently reached the side of the ladies.

"Good evening to you," he said, looking up at them with dancing eyes, and was about to go on. But they liked this goat boy with the bright eyes.

"Wait a moment," said Paula. "Are you the goat boy of Fideris? And are these the goats from the village?"

"To be sure they are," he answered.

"And do you take them up every day?"

"Yes, of course."

"Indeed? And what is your name?"

"I am called Moni."

"Will you sing me the song you were just singing? We heard only a few lines of it."

"It is too long," said Moni. "The goats should n't be kept out so late; they must go home." Setting his weathered little hat to rights, he flourished his switch at the browsing goats and called, "Home, home!"

"Then you will sing it for me some other time, won't you, Moni?" cried Paula after him.

"Yes, yes; good night!" he called back and started on a trot with his goats. In a few moments the whole flock had arrived at the outbuildings of the hotel, where Moni had to leave the landlord's goats, the pretty white one and the black one with the dainty little kid. This little one Moni cared for very tenderly, for it was a delicate little creature and his favorite of them all. Little Meggy, in turn, showed her affection for the boy by keeping very close to him all day long. In the stable he put her gently in her place, saying: "There, sleep well, little Meggy; you must be tired. It 's a long trip for a little goat like you. But here is your nice clean bed."

After laying her down in the fresh straw he started with his herd down the highway toward the village. Presently he lifted his little horn to his lips and blew a blast that resounded far down the valley. At that the village children came tumbling from their homes on all sides. Each one recognizing his own goat made a rush for it and took it home, while women, too, came out of the near-by houses and led away their goats by neck ropes or by the horns. In a few moments the whole herd was dispersed and each goat was stabled in its proper place. Moni was left with his own goat, Brownie, and the two started off toward the little house on the hillside, where grandmother was waiting for them in the door.

"Has everything gone well, Moni?" she asked in friendly tones, while she led Brownie into the stable and began milking her. The old grandmother was still a strong, vigorous woman, herself performing all the duties of house and stable and preserving the best of order everywhere. Moni stood in the stable door and watched her. When she had finished milking she went into the house saying, "Come Moni; you must be hungry."

Everything was ready and Moni sat down to eat; she sat beside him, and though the meal consisted of but a simple dish of porridge stewed in

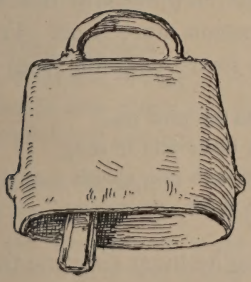
goat's milk, it was a feast for the hungry boy. Meanwhile he told grandmother what had happened during the day; then, as soon as he had finished his supper, he slipped off to bed, for at early dawn he was to start out again with his flock.

In this way Moni had now spent two summers and had grown so accustomed to this life and to the companionship of his goats that he could hardly think of any other existence for himself. He had lived with his grandmother ever since he could remember. His mother had died when he was a tiny baby; his father had soon after left him to go into military service in Naples. The grandmother was herself poor, but she immediately took the forsaken little boy, Solomon, into her own home and shared with him whatever she had of food and other goods. And, indeed, a blessing seemed to rest upon the house from that day, for never since had she suffered want.

Honest old Elsbeth was much respected in the village, and when there had been a call two years before for a new goat boy the choice fell unanimously upon Moni, for every one was glad to help the good woman along in this way. Not a single morning had the God-fearing grandmother started the boy off without reminding him: "Moni, do not forget how close you are to God up there in the

mountains; how he sees and hears everything and how you can hide nothing from his eyes. But remember, too, that he is always near to help you, so you need not fear; and if there is no one at hand to help you in time of need, call upon God, and his hand will not fail you."

So Moni had always gone forth trustfully to his mountain heights, and on the loneliest peaks he knew no fear, for he always thought, "The higher up I go, the nearer I am to the good God and therefore the safer in everything that may happen to me." So, free from care, he could enjoy everything about him from morning to night. No wonder, then, that he sang and whistled and yodeled all day long, for he must express his happiness somehow.



CHAPTER II

MONI'S LIFE ON THE MOUNTAIN

Next morning Paula awakened unusually early; a lusty singing had roused her from sleep. "It must be the goat boy," she said, jumping up and running to the window.

Sure enough, there he stood with bright, shining face; he had just taken the old goat and the little kid out of the stable. Now he flourished his switch, the goats skipped and ran about him, and the whole procession started on. Presently Moni's voice was again heard echoing from the hills:

"Up mid the pine trees
The birds join in song,
And though rain clouds may darken,
The sun 's out erelong."

"This evening he must sing me the whole song," said Paula; for Moni had now disappeared and his distant song could no longer be heard.

Red morning clouds still hung in the sky and a fresh mountain breeze was rustling about Moni's ears as he climbed up the mountain. It was just what he liked. He stopped on the first peak, and for sheer happiness yodeled forth so lustily into the valley that many a sleeper in the hotel opened his eyes in surprise, but quickly closed them again, for he recognized the voice and so knew that he might have another hour's nap, as the goat boy always came very early. Meanwhile Moni continued climbing for an hour, higher and higher, up to the rocky ledges.

The view grew wider and more beautiful the higher he climbed. Occasionally he would stop to look about him, across at the mountains and up to the bright sky that was growing bluer and bluer, and then he would sing out in a strong, happy voice:

"Up mid the pine trees
The birds join in song,
And though rain clouds may darken,
The sun 's out erelong.

"The sun and the stars
And the moon shining clear,
These the dear God has made
For our comfort and cheer.

"In the spring there are flowers,
Red, yellow, and white,

And the sky is so blue
I am wild with delight.

"The summer brings berries
Of many a kind,
Red ones and black ones, —
I eat all I find.

"In fall I hunt nuts;
And I 'm sure that I know
Why the goats like to graze
Where the best grasses grow.

"The winter is cold,
But who would be sad?
For spring will return
To make the world glad."

Now he had reached the spot where he usually stayed and where he meant to rest for a while to-day. It was a little green plateau standing out from the mountain side, so that one might look out from it in all directions and far down into the valley. This projection was called the "Pulpit." Here Moni would often sit for hours, looking out over the surrounding country, whistling to himself, while his goats were contentedly gathering herbs.

As soon as Moni had reached this spot he unstrapped his lunch box from his back, laid it in a little hollow which he had dug for it in the earth, and then went out on the Pulpit, where he stretched

out on the ground and gave himself up to the full enjoyment of the hour. The sky was now dark blue; on the opposite mountains ice fields and sharp peaks had come to view, and far below the green valley lay sparkling in the morning light. Moni lay there, looking about him, singing and whistling. The wind cooled his hot face, and when his own notes ceased for a moment the birds overhead whistled all the more merrily as they mounted into the blue sky. Moni felt indescribably happy. Now and then little Meggy would come to him and rub her head against his shoulder in her affectionate way, bleat tenderly, and then go to the other side and rub against his other shoulder. The old ones, too, would come up now and then and show their friendship in their own particular fashion.

Brownie, his own goat, had a way of coming up to him quite anxiously and looking him over very carefully to see whether he was all right. She would stand before him, waiting, until he said: "Yes, yes, Brownie; it 's all right. Go back to your grazing now." Swallow, the slender, lively little creature that darted to and fro like a swallow in and out of its nest, always came up with the young white one. The two would charge down upon Moni with a force that would have overthrown him had he not already been stretched flat

on the ground. After a brief visit they would dart off again as quickly as they had come.

The shiny black one, little Meggy's mother, who belonged to the hotel, was rather proud. She would stand off several feet from the boy, look at him with a lofty air, as if afraid of seeming too familiar, and then pass on her way. Sultan, the big leader of the flock, in the one daily visit that he paid would rudely push aside any other goat that might be near, give several significant bleats, — probably meant for reports on the condition of his family, — and then turn away.

Little Meggy alone refused to be pushed away from her protector. When Sultan came and tried to thrust her aside, she would slip down as far as she could under Moni's arm, and thus protected she had no fear of the big buck, who was otherwise so formidable to her.

Thus the sunshiny morning passed. Moni had finished his noon lunch and was leaning meditatively on the long cane which he always kept at hand for difficult places. He was thinking about a new ascent, for he meant to go up higher with the goats this afternoon. The question was, which side should he take, right or left? He chose the left, for there he would come to the three "Dragon Rocks," about which the tenderest, most luscious herbage grew.

The path was steep and there were dangerous places along a precipitous wall, but he knew a good road and the goats were sensible creatures and would not easily run astray. He started and the goats ran merrily along, now before him, now behind, little Meggy always very close to him; sometimes he picked her up and carried her over the worst places. But all went well and they reached the desired spot safely. The goats made a rush for the green bushes, remembering the juicy shoots they had enjoyed there before.

"Gently, gently!" Moni warned them. "Don't butt one another along the steep places. You might easily slide off and have your legs broken. Swallow, Swallow, what are you about?" he called out excitedly to the cliff above. The nimble goat had scrambled over the high Dragon Rock and was now standing on the outer edge of the cliff, looking down saucily upon him. He hastily scrambled up the cliff, meanwhile keeping an anxious eye upon the goat, for a single misstep would have landed her in the abyss below. Moni was agile and in a few moments he had climbed the rock and, with a quick movement, had grasped Swallow by the leg and pulled her back. "You come with me now, you foolish little beast," he said as he drew her down to where the others were feeding. He held her

for a while, until she was contentedly nibbling at a tender shrub and had no more thoughts of running away.

Suddenly Moni cried out, "Where is little Meggy?" He saw the black mother standing alone by a steep wall; she was not eating, but was looking all about her and pointing her ears in a strange manner. The little kid was always either beside Moni or running after its mother.

"Where is your little one, Blackie?" he said, standing close beside her and looking up and down. Then he heard a faint, wailing bleat. It was Meggy's voice and came from far below, piteous, entreating. Moni got down on the ground and leaned forward. Below him something seemed to be moving; now he saw it plainly, — it was Meggy hanging in the branches of a tree that grew out of the rocks. She was wailing pitifully.

Luckily the branch had caught her, else she would have fallen into the abyss and been dashed to death. If she should even now lose her hold, she must plunge instantly into the depths below. In terror he called to her: "Hold fast, Meggy! hold fast to the tree! I'm coming down to get you."

But how was he to get there? The rocks were so steep at this point that he could not possibly get down. But he reflected that he must be somewhere near the "Rain Rock," that overhanging

cliff under which the goat boys had for generations found shelter. From there, thought Moni, he might climb across the rocks and so get back with the kid. He quickly called the goats together and took them to the entrance of the Rain Rock. There he left them to graze and went out toward the cliff. Some distance above him he saw the tree with Meggy clinging to it.

He realized that it would be no easy matter to climb up the cliff and then down again with Meggy on his back, but there was no other way of rescuing her. And then, too, he felt sure the dear God would help him, so that he could not fall. He folded his hands, looked up into heaven, and prayed, "Dear God, please help me to save little Meggy."

Then he felt confident that all would go well and he climbed bravely up the cliff until he reached the tree. Here he held himself tight with both feet, lifted the trembling, whining little creature to his shoulders, and then worked his way down very cautiously. When they had the solid ground once more underfoot and he saw that the frightened little goat was safe, he felt so glad that he had to speak his thanks aloud, and he called up to heaven: "Dear God, I thank you a thousand, thousand times for helping us back safely. We are both so very, very glad."

He sat down on the ground for a while to caress and quiet the little creature, that was still trembling in every limb, until it had somewhat recovered from its terrible experience.

When it was time, soon afterward, for breaking up, Moni again lifted the kid to his shoulders, saying solicitously: "Come, my poor little Meggy; you are still trembling; you cannot walk home to-day; I must carry you." And so he carried her, cuddled close in his arm, all the way home.

Paula was standing on the ledge near the hotel, waiting for the boy to pass. Her aunt was with her. When Moni came along with his burden, Paula wanted to know whether the little goat was sick. She seemed so interested that Moni sat down on the ground before her and told the whole story about Meggy.

The young Fräulein showed great sympathy and stooped to caress the little creature, that was now lying quietly on Moni's knees, looking very pretty with its little white feet and smooth black coat, and evidently enjoying the girl's attention.

"Now sing me your song while you are resting here so comfortably," said Paula.

Moni was so happy that he gladly complied with her request, and sang the song through to a lusty close.

Paula was delighted with it and said he must sing it for her often. Then the whole company went on down to the hotel. There the little kid was put to bed. Moni took his leave. Paula went to her room and talked for a long time about the goat boy, about his happy nature, his lonely life on the mountain, and the joys and privations of such a life. In this far-off, strange hotel there was little diversion for the girl, and she was already looking forward to the boy's happy morning song as one of the pleasures of the morrow.

CHAPTER III

A VISIT

Thus several days passed, each one as sunny and bright as the one before it; for it was an unusually fine summer, and from morning to night the sky was blue and cloudless.

Every morning at early dawn the goat boy had passed the hotel singing his merry song, and had come back still singing at evening; and all the guests were so accustomed to the cheerful sound that they would have been sorry not to hear it.

But Paula, most of all, enjoyed Moni's happiness, and went to meet him every evening, that she might have a little talk with him.

One sunshiny morning Moni had again reached the Pulpit and was just about to settle down upon the ground when he reflected: "No, we'll go on farther to-day. The last time we had to leave all the good, juicy food because we went after little Meggy. Now we'll go up again and you can finish grazing."

Joyously the goats ran after him, for they understood that they were being led to the fine feeding on Dragon Rock. But this time Moni was careful to hold little Meggy close in his arm all the way. He picked the tenderest leaves and fed them to her, and the little kid showed her appreciation by rubbing her head against his arm and bleating contentedly from time to time. So the morning passed until Moni presently realized from his hunger that it had grown surprisingly late. But his lunch was in the little cave by the Pulpit, for he had intended to be back there by noon.

"Now you have had many a good mouthful and I have had nothing," he said to his goats. "It is time I had something, too. Come, we'll go down; there is enough left for you on the lower slope."

With that he whistled shrilly, and the whole flock started downward, the liveliest ones in the van; Swallow, the light-footed one, — for whom there were unexpected things in store that day, — in advance of them all. She jumped from rock to rock and over many a chasm; but suddenly she could go no farther, for directly in front of her stood a chamois, looking her saucily in the face. Swallow had never had such an experience before. She stood still and looked questioningly at the stranger, waiting for him to step aside and allow her to make

the fine jump she had in mind to the opposite rock. But the chamois never moved, and stood staring boldly into Swallow's face. So they faced each other, getting more and more obstinate every moment; they would probably be standing there to this day had not Sultan come up at this point. Taking in the situation, he carefully moved past Swallow and pushed the stranger so forcibly to one side that he had to make a quick jump to escape sliding off the cliff. Then Swallow passed triumphantly on her way and Sultan marched proudly behind her, feeling himself to be the mighty protector of the herd.

Meanwhile another meeting was taking place. Moni, coming from above, and another goat boy from below, had met face to face and were looking at each other in astonishment. But they were old acquaintances and, after their first surprise, greeted each other heartily. The newcomer was Jordie from Kueblis. He had been looking for Moni half the morning, and now found him where he least expected.

"I did not think you went up so high with the goats," said Jordie.

"To be sure I do," answered Moni, "but not always. I am generally somewhere near the Pulpit. But why are you up here?"

"I wanted to see you; I have lots to tell you. And these two goats here I am taking to the hotel

keeper; he wants to buy one, — so I thought I'd visit you on the way."

"Are they your goats?" asked Moni.

"Of course they are. I don't herd other people's goats any longer. I'm not goat boy now."

Moni was surprised at this, for Jordie had started out as goat boy of Kueblis at the same time that he had been chosen from Fideris. He could not understand how that could all be ended without a sign of regret on Jordie's part.

But the boys had by this time reached the Pulpit. Here Moni brought out his bread and dried meat and invited Jordie to lunch. They sat out on the Pulpit and ate their lunch with a relish, for it had grown late and both were hungry. When they had eaten everything and finished off with a drink of goat's milk, Jordie stretched out full length on the ground and leaned his head on his arms; but Moni preferred to sit up and look out over the great valley.

"But if you are no longer goat boy, Jordie, what are you?" Moni began. "You must be something."

"Of course I am something, — something worth while, you may believe," answered Jordie. "I am egg boy. I go to the hotels with eggs every day. I go up to the baths, too. Was there yesterday."

Moni shook his head. "That would n't do for me, — to be egg boy. No, I'd rather be goat boy, a thousand times rather. That is much better."

"And why, I'd like to know?"

"Eggs are n't alive. You can't talk with them, and they won't follow you like goats, and be glad when you come, and love you, and understand every word you say to them. You can't possibly enjoy your eggs as I do my goats."

"Yes; great enjoyment you must have up here!" said Jordie scornfully. "What pleasures do you have? Since we've been sitting here you've had to jump up six times to run after that silly little goat, to keep her from falling over the rock. Is that any pleasure?"

"Yes, I like it. You know that, Meggy, don't you? Careful, careful!" he called, jumping up and running after her, for in her joy she was capering about most recklessly.

When he came back Jordie said, "Don't you know that there is another way of keeping young goats from falling over the cliffs, that will save your running after them every few minutes?"

"How is that?" asked Moni.

"Drive a stake into the ground and tie the goat to it by one leg; she will struggle desperately, but she can't get away."

"You don't really think that I would do such a thing to little Meggy!" cried Moni indignantly, while he drew her close to him and held her fast, as though to defend her from such treatment.

"This little one, of course, won't bother you much longer," Jordie went on. "There won't be many more times for it to come up."

"What? what? What did you say, Jordie?"

"Pshaw! Don't you know that the landlord does n't mean to raise it? It is too weak; he thinks it will never grow to be a strong goat. He wanted to sell it to my father, but father did not want it. So now he is going to kill it, and then he will buy our Spottie."

Moni had grown white with horror. For a moment he could not speak; then he broke forth in a loud wail over the little goat: "No, no! they shan't do it, my little Meggy; they shan't kill you. I won't have it; I'd rather die with you! No, no! I can't let them; I can't let them."

"Don't carry on so!" said Jordie, annoyed; and he pulled Moni up from the ground, where he had thrown himself, face downward, in his grief. "Come, get up. You know the kid belongs to the landlord and he can do with it as he pleases. Don't think about it any more. Here, I have something else. Look! look here!" and Jordie held out

one hand toward Moni, while with the other he almost covered something that he was offering for Moni's admiration. It flashed out most wonderfully from between his hands as the sun shone upon it.

"What is it?" asked Moni, seeing it sparkle.

"Guess!"

"A ring?"

"No; but something of the sort."

"Who gave it to you?"

"Gave it? Nobody. I found it."

"Then it does n't belong to you, Jordie."

"Why not? I did n't steal it. I almost stepped on it; then it would have been crushed anyway. So I might as well have it."

"Where did you find it?"

"Down by the hotel last night."

"Then somebody in the house lost it; you must tell the landlord. If you don't, I'll tell him this evening."

"No, no! you must n't do that," cried Jordie. "Look! I'll let you see it. I'm going to sell it to a chambermaid in one of the hotels; but she must give me at least four francs, and I will give you one, or perhaps two, and no one shall know anything about it."

"I don't want it! I don't want it!" Moni interrupted angrily; "and God has heard every word you said."

Jordie looked up to heaven. "Too far away," he said doubtfully, but he took care to lower his voice.

"He 'll hear you, anyway," said Moni with assurance.

Jordie began to feel uncomfortable. He must get Moni over to his side or he would spoil the whole game. Jordie thought and thought.

"Moni," he said suddenly, "I will promise you something that will please you, if you won't tell any one about what I found. And you need n't take any of the money; then you won't have anything to do with it. If you 'll promise, then I will persuade father to buy little Meggy, so that she won't be killed. Will you?"

That started a hard struggle in Moni. It would be sinful to conceal the finding of the treasure. Jordie had opened his hand; there lay a cross set with many jewels that sparkled with all colors. Moni saw that it was no trifling thing that would not be searched after. He felt that if he did not tell it would be the same as though he himself were keeping something that did not belong to him, But, on the other hand, there was dear little Meggy; she would be killed — horribly butchered with a knife, and he could prevent it if he kept silent. The little kid was at that moment lying trustfully

beside him, as though she knew that he would always protect her. No, he must not let such a thing happen; he must do something to save her.

"Then I will, Jordie," he said, but without any enthusiasm.

"Your hand on it!" and Jordie held out his own hand, for thus a promise was made inviolable.

Jordie was very glad that he was now safe with his treasure; but as Moni had grown so quiet, and as he had a longer way home than Moni, he thought it best to start on. He took leave of Moni and whistled to his two goats, which had meanwhile joined Moni's grazing flock, — not without various buttings and other doubtful encounters, however; for the goats of Fideris had never heard that one must be polite to company, and the goats of Kueblis did not know that when one is on a visit it is not proper to pick out the best feeding for oneself and push every one else away from it. When Jordie was halfway down the mountain Moni, too, set out with his flock, but he was very quiet and gave forth not a note of song or whistle all the way home.

CHAPTER IV

MONI CANNOT SING

The next morning Moni came to the hotel as quiet and downcast as he had been the evening before. He came silently, took away the landlord's goats, and then started on his upward journey, without ever opening his lips for a song or a yodel; he hung his head and looked as though he were afraid of something. Now and then he cast a furtive glance around to see if some one was not following him.

Moni could not be happy any more; he could hardly tell why. He felt that he ought to be glad because he had saved little Meggy, and he tried to sing, but he could not. The sun happened to be clouded that day; he thought that when the sky cleared he would feel quite different, and would be happy again. When he got up on the mountain it began to rain hard. Soon the rain came down in torrents and he took refuge under the Rain Rock.

The goats, too, came and stood under the rock. The proud black one, careful of her fine glossy coat, had crept in even before Moni. She now lay behind him, looking out contentedly from her comfortable corner into the streaming rain. Meggy stood in front of her protector and rubbed her head affectionately against his knee, then looked up astonished to find that he did not say a word to her, for that was most extraordinary. His own brown goat, too, pawed at his feet and bleated, for he had not spoken to her all the morning. He sat there, leaning thoughtfully on his cane, which he carried in rainy weather to keep him from slipping on the rocks, for on such days he wore shoes. To-day, as he sat for hours under the rock, he had plenty of time for reflection.

He thought over what he had promised Jordie. It seemed as though Jordie had stolen something and he had done the same; for was not Jordie going to give him something for it? He had at any rate done what was wrong, and God was displeased with him, — he felt that in his heart. He was glad that it was dark and rainy, and that he was hidden under the rock, for he would not dare look up into the blue sky as he had formerly. He was afraid now of the dear God.

Other things, too, came into his mind. What if Meggy should fall over a steep place again, and he

should try to save her, and God would no longer help him? What if he could never pray to him any more, or have any hope of help from him? And what if his feet should slip? Then he and Meggy would fall down on the jagged rocks and lie there all torn and mangled.

"Oh, no!" he cried in his troubled heart; "this cannot be." He must make his peace with the dear God, so that he could pray once more and go to him with all his troubles; then he could be happy again. He would throw off the weight that was upon him; he would go and tell the landlord everything. But then? Then Jordie would not persuade his father, and the landlord would have little Meggy butchered. Oh, no, no, no! he could not endure that; and he said: "No, I will not. I will say nothing." But that did not relieve him; the weight on his heart grew heavier and heavier.

So the whole day passed. He came home at night as silent as he had gone forth in the morning; and when Paula, waiting at the hotel, eagerly ran out to him and asked sympathetically: "Moni, what is the matter? Why don't you sing?" he turned away embarrassed, saying, "Can't," and went away as quickly as possible.

In their room upstairs Paula said to her aunt: "If I only knew what is wrong with the goat boy!

He is so changed I hardly know him. If he would only sing again!"

"This wretched weather probably spoils the boy's humor," said her aunt.

"Everything seems to be going wrong. Let us go home, auntie," begged Paula. "Our good times are over. First I lose my beautiful cross and there is no trace of it anywhere; then this endless rain sets in; and now there is not even the jolly goat boy to listen to. Let us go home."

"But we must finish the treatment here. There is no way out of it," said her aunt.

The next morning was again dark and cloudy and the rain poured down without intermission. Moni spent the day as he had the one before. He sat under the rocks, his thoughts going round and round in the same circle. Whenever he reached the resolution, "Now I will go and confess the wrong, so that I can look up to God once more," he saw the little goat under the butcher's knife, and the whole struggle began again from the beginning; so that he was quite worn out when evening came, and went crawling home through the drenching rain as though he hardly noticed it.

As he passed the hotel the landlord called to him: "Can't you get along a little faster? Look how wet they are. What 's come over you, anyway, lately?"

Such cross words had never been addressed to him before by the landlord. On the contrary, the latter had always shown special friendliness to the boy; but now he was irritated by Moni's altered manner, and was in bad humor otherwise, for Paula had told him about her missing jewel, which she declared could have been lost only within the hotel or directly before the door, for she had left the house on that day only to listen to the goat boy's song. To have it said that so valuable an article could be lost in his house, and not be returned, annoyed the landlord extremely. On the previous day he had summoned the whole staff of servants, had examined them, threatened them, and had finally offered a reward to the finder. The whole establishment was upset by the occurrence.

When Moni passed the front of the hotel Paula was there waiting for him, wondering why he had not yet found his song.

"Moni, Moni!" she called; "are you really the same boy who used to come by here singing from morning to night, —

> 'And the sky is so blue
> I am wild with delight'?"

Moni heard the words and they made a deep impression on him, but he gave no answer. He

felt that it had indeed been different when he went about singing all day, with a spirit as happy as his song. Would such days ever come again?

The next morning he climbed the mountain sad and silent as the day before. The rain had stopped, but a heavy mist hung over the mountains, and the sky was covered with dark clouds. Moni sat under the rocks, tortured with distressing thoughts. Toward noon the sky began to clear. It grew brighter and brighter, and Moni came out of the cave and looked about. The goats were gayly skipping about once more, the little kid wantonly capering in the sunshine.

Moni stood out on the Pulpit watching the sky and the mountains as they came out brighter and brighter. When the clouds parted and the blue heavens shone forth, it seemed to Moni as though the dear God were looking down on him from heaven. Suddenly things within him seemed to grow very clear, and he knew what he must do. He could not carry the wrong about in his heart any longer; he felt that he must cast it off. Then he seized the frolicsome little kid, took it in his arms, and said tenderly: "O my Meggy, my poor little Meggy! I have surely done what I could; but it was sinful and bad. Now you must die. Oh, oh! how can I endure it!" And he began to cry so bitterly that he could say no more.

The little kid uttered a sad cry and crept as far under his arm as she could, as though to hide and be safe with him. He lifted her to his shoulders.

"Come, Meggy," he said; "I'll carry you home once more. Perhaps soon I shall not have you to carry."

When the company reached the hotel Paula was again waiting. Moni left the little kid and the old black mother in the stable. Then, instead of going on down, he came to the house and was about to go in, when the Fräulein stopped him.

"Haven't you found your song yet, Moni? Where are you going with that look of woe?"

"I have something to report," answered Moni, without raising his eyes.

"To report? What is it? Won't you tell me?"

"I must see the landlord. Something was found."

"Found? What? I lost something, — a beautiful cross."

"That is it."

"What did you say?" cried Paula, in greatest astonishment. "A cross with sparkling stones?"

"Yes, exactly."

"Where is it, Moni? Give it to me. Did you find it?"

"No; Jordie of Kueblis did."

Paula wanted to know who Jordie was and where he lived, and was about to send some one down to Kueblis right away to get the cross.

"I will go; and if he still has the cross, I will bring it," said Moni.

"If he still has it!" cried Paula. "Why should he not have it? and how do you know all about this, Moni? When did he find it, and how did you hear about it?"

Moni stared at the ground; he dared not tell how it had all happened and how he had helped to hide the discovery until he had been forced to speak.

But Paula was very kind to him. She led him aside, sat down on a tree stump with him, and said reassuringly: "Come, tell me how it happened, Moni. I want you to tell me all about it."

So Moni took courage and began. He told the whole story, — all about his struggles for Meggy's sake; how he had grown so miserable through it all and dared not look up to God; and how he had not been able to endure it longer and had resolved to tell.

Then Paula gave him friendly advice and said he ought to have come at once and reported, but it was right that he had now told her everything so frankly, and he would not regret it. She said

he might promise Jordie ten francs as soon as she had the cross in her possession once more.

"Ten francs!" repeated Moni in surprise, remembering how Jordie had wanted to sell it. Then he rose. He would go back to Kueblis that very night, and if he got the cross, bring it back to-morrow morning. Then he ran away, realizing as he went that he could skip and jump once more, and that the heavy burden was no longer on his heart.

On reaching home he merely told his grandmother that he had an errand in Kueblis, and at once started off. He found Jordie at home and told him what he had done. Jordie was quite angry with him for a moment, but when he reflected that further concealment was now impossible he brought out the cross, asking, "What is she going to give me for it?"

Moni was ready with his answer: "Ten francs. You see honest dealing would have paid you best, for with your dishonesty you expected to get only four francs; but you will get your money."

Jordie was surprised, and regretted that he had not gone to the hotel at once with the cross, and so come off with a clear conscience, which he certainly had not now. Things might have been quite different, but it was too late. He gave the cross to Moni, who hurried home, as it had grown quite dark.

CHAPTER V

MONI SINGS ONCE MORE

Paula had left orders that she was to be called early in the morning. She wanted to be on hand when the goat boy came, and settle with him herself. The previous evening she had had a long interview with the landlord, coming away from his room with a look of satisfaction, as though she had made some pleasant arrangement with him.

When Moni came up with his herd in the morning Paula called to him, "Moni, can't you sing even now?"

He shook his head. "I can't. I keep thinking of poor little Meggy and how many days longer she will be with me. I 'll never sing again as long as I live; but here is the cross." With that he gave her the parcel, which his grandmother had carefully done up for him in many wrappings.

Paula took the jewel from its coverings and examined it closely; it was really her precious cross of sparkling stones, perfectly unharmed.

"Well, Moni, you have made me very happy. Without you I should probably never have seen my cross again. So I want to make you happy, too. Go and get little Meggy; she belongs to you now."

Moni stared at the Fräulein as though he could not comprehend her words. At length he stammered, "But how — how can Meggy belong to me?"

"How?" said Paula, smiling. "Last night I bought her from the landlord, and to-day I give her to you. Can you sing now?"

"Oh! oh! oh!" cried Moni, running to the stable like mad. He took the little goat and held her close in his arms. Then he came running back and held out his hand to the Fräulein, saying over and over again, "I thank you a thousand, thousand times! God reward you for it! If I could only do something for you!"

"Then sing your song and let us hear whether it has the old ring," said Paula.

So Moni lifted up his voice, and as he climbed the mountain his joyous notes rang out so clearly through the valley that every one in the hotel noticed it, and many a sleeper turned on his pillow, saying, "Good! the goat boy has sunshine once more."

They were all glad to hear him sing again, for they liked the early notes, which were to some

a sign for rising, to others leave for another nap. When Moni looked down from the first ledge and saw the Fräulein still standing before the hotel, he stepped forward and sang as loudly as he could :

"And the sky is so blue
I am wild with delight."

Nothing but sounds of joy came from his lips all day, and the goats, too, seemed to feel that it was a day of gladness, and skipped and capered about as never before. The sun was so bright, the sky so blue, and after the heavy rains the grasses so green and the flowers so gay, that Moni thought he had never seen the world so beautiful. He kept his little kid beside him all day, plucked the best herbs for it, and fed it from his hand, saying again and again : "Meggy, dear little Meggy, you are not going to be killed. You are mine now, and will come up the mountain with me as long as we both live."

With happy song and yodel Moni returned in the evening, and after he had led the black goat to her stable he took the little one on his arm ; she was henceforth to go home with him. Meggy seemed very well satisfied, and cuddled up to him as though she felt herself in the best of care ; for he had always treated her more tenderly than her own mother had.

When Moni came home with the little one on his shoulder his grandmother hardly knew what to make of him. His calling out, "It is mine, grandmother; it is mine!" explained nothing to her. But Moni could not stop to explain until he had run to the stable and made a good bed for Meggy close beside their own goat, so that the little one would not be lonely.

"There, Meggy; now sleep well in your new home. You shall always have a good bed. I will make it fresh for you every day."

Then Moni ran in to the wondering grandmother, and while they sat at supper he told her the whole story, — of his three sad, troubled days and the happy ending of it all. His grandmother listened attentively, and when he had finished she said earnestly: "Moni, this experience you must always remember. Had you done right in the first place, trusting in the good God, then everything would have gone well. Now God has helped you so much more than you deserve that you must not forget it as long as you live." And Moni was very sure that he would not forget.

Before he went to sleep he had to go to the stable once more to make sure that the little kid really belonged to him and was there in its bed.

Jordie got his ten francs, as promised, but that did not end the matter for him. When he went to

the hotel he was taken before the landlord, who gave him a severe lecture. But the worst of it all was that whenever anything was missed after that, it was Jordie who was immediately suspected of having stolen it. He had no more peace, for he was continually in dread of being punished for something that he had never done.

Moni's little goat throve and grew strong, and the boy continued to sing all summer. But often when he was comfortably stretched out on the Pulpit, he thought of the troubled days under the Rain Rock, and he said to himself, "It must never happen so again."

But when he was too long absorbed in such reflections one or another of the goats would come and rouse him with a questioning bleat.

WITHOUT A FRIEND

WITHOUT A FRIEND

CHAPTER I

HE IS GOOD FOR NOTHING

The traveler who ascends Mt. Seelis from the rear will presently find himself coming out upon a spot where a green meadow, fresh and vivid, is spread out upon the mountain side. The place is so inviting that one feels tempted to join the peacefully grazing cows and fall to eating the soft green grass with them. The clean, well-fed cattle wander about with pleasant musical accompaniment; for each cow wears a bell, so that one may tell by the sound whether any of them are straying too far out toward the edge, where the precipice is hidden by bushes and where a single misstep would be fatal. There is a company of boys, to be sure, to watch the cows, but the bells are also necessary, and their tinkling is so pleasant to hear that it would be a pity not to have them.

Little wooden houses dot the mountain side, and here and there a turbulent stream comes tumbling down the slope. Not one of the cottages stands on level ground; it seems as though they had somehow been thrown against the mountain and had stuck there, for it would be hard to conceive of their being built on this steep slope. From the highway below you might think them all equally neat and cheery, with their open galleries and little wooden stairways, but when you came nearer to them you would notice that they differed very much in character.

The two first ones were not at all alike. The distance between them was not very great, yet they stood quite apart, for the largest stream of the neighborhood, Clear Brook, as it is called, rushed down between them. In the first cottage all the little windows were kept tightly closed even through the finest summer days, and no fresh air was ever let in except through the broken windowpanes, and that was little enough, for the holes had been pasted over with paper to keep out the winter's cold. The steps of the outside stairway were in many places broken away, and the gallery was in such a ruinous state that it seemed as though the many little children crawling and stumbling about on it must surely break their arms or legs. But

they all were sound enough in body though very dirty; their faces were covered with grime and their hair had never been touched by a comb. Four of these little urchins scrambled about here through the day, and at evening they were joined by four older ones, — three sturdy boys and a girl, — who were at work during the day. These, too, were none too clean, but they looked a little better than the younger ones, for they could at least wash themselves.

The little house across the stream had quite a different air. Even before you reached the steps, everything looked so clean and tidy that you thought the very ground must be different from that across the stream. The steps always looked as though they had just been scrubbed, and on the gallery there were three pots of blooming pinks that wafted fragrance through the windows all summer long. One of the bright little windows stood open to let in the fresh mountain air, and within the room a woman might be seen, still strong and active in spite of the snowy white hair under her neat black cap. She was often at work mending a man's shirt, that was stout and coarse in material but was always washed with great care.

The woman herself looked so trim and neat in her simple dress that one fancied she had never

in her life touched anything unclean. It was Frau Vincenze, mother of the young herdsman Franz Martin, he of the smiling face and strong arm. Franz Martin lived in his little hut on the mountain all summer making cheese, and returned to his mother's cottage only in the late fall, to spend the winter with her and make butter in the lower dairy hut near by.

As there was no bridge across the wild stream, the two cottages were quite separated, and there were other people much farther away whom Frau Vincenze knew better than these neighbors right across the brook; for she seldom looked over at them, — the sight was not agreeable to her. She would shake her head disapprovingly when she saw the black faces and dirty rags on the children, while the stream of fresh, clean water ran so near their door. She preferred, when the twilight rest hour came, to enjoy her red carnations on the gallery, or to look down over the green slope that stretched from her cottage to the valley below.

The neglected children across the stream belonged to "Poor Grass Joe," as he was called, who was usually employed away from home in haying, or chopping wood, or carrying burdens up the mountain. The wife had much to do at home, to be sure, but she seemed to take it for granted that

so many children could not possibly be kept in order, and that in time, when the children grew older, things would mend of their own accord. So she let everything go as it would, and in the fresh, pure air the children remained healthy and were happy enough scrambling around on the steps and on the ground.

In the summer time the four older ones were out all day herding cows; for here in the lower pasture the whole herd of cows was not left to graze under one or two boys, as on the high Alps, but each farmer had to hire his own herd boy to look after his cows. This made jolly times for the boys and girls, who spent the long days together playing pranks and making merry in the broad green fields. Sometimes Joe's children were hired for potato weeding farther down the valley, or for other light field work. Thus they earned their living through the summer and brought home many a penny besides, which their mother could turn to good account; for there were always the four little mouths to be fed and clothes to be got for all the children. However simple these clothes might be, each child must have at least a little shirt, and the older ones one other garment besides. The family was too poor to possess even a cow, though there was scarcely a farmer in the neighborhood

who did not own one, however small his piece of land might be.

Poor Grass Joe had got his name from the fact that the spears of grass on his land were so scarce that they would not support so much as a cow. He had only a goat and a potato field. With these small resources the wife had to struggle through the summer and provide for the four little ones, and sometimes, when work was scarce, for one or two of the older ones also. The father occasionally came home in the winter, but he brought very little to his family, for his house and land were so heavily mortgaged that he was never out of debt throughout the whole year. Whenever he had earned a little money, some one whom he owed would come and take it all away.

So the wife had a hard time to get along, — all the more so because she had no order in her housekeeping and was not skillful in any kind of work. She would often go out and stand on the tumble-down gallery, where the boards were lying loose and ready to drop off, and instead of taking a hammer and fastening them down would look across the stream at the neat little cottage with the bright windows, and would say fretfully, "Yes, it 's all very well for her to clean and scrub, — she has nothing else to do; but with me it 's quite different."

Then she would turn back angrily into the close, dingy room and vent her anger on the first person who crossed her path. This usually happened to be a boy of ten or eleven years, who was not her own child, but who had lived in her house ever since he was a baby. This little fellow, known only by the name of "Stupid Rudi," was so lean and gaunt looking that one would have taken him to be scarcely eight years old. His timid, shrinking manner made it difficult to tell what kind of a looking boy he really was, for he never took his eyes from the ground when any one spoke to him.

Rudi had never known a mother; she had died when he was hardly two years old, and shortly afterward his father had met with an accident when returning from the mountain one evening. He had been wild haying, and, seeking to reach home by a short cut, had lost his footing and fallen over a precipice. The fall lamed him, and after that he was not fit for any other work but braiding mats, which he sold in the big hotel on Mt. Seelis. Little Rudi never saw his father otherwise than sitting on a low stool with a straw mat on his knees. "Lame Rudolph" was the name the man went by. Now he had been dead six years. After his wife's death he had rented a little corner in Joe's house for himself and boy to sleep in, and the little fellow

had remained there ever since. The few pennies paid by the community for Rudi's support were very acceptable to Joe's wife, and the extra space in his bedroom, after the father's death, was eagerly seized for two of her own boys, who had scarcely had sleeping room for some time.

Rudi had been by nature a shy, quiet little fellow. The father, after the loss of his wife and the added misfortune of being crippled, lost all spirit; little as he had been given to talking before his misfortune, he was even more silent afterward.

So little Rudi would sit beside his father for whole days without hearing a word spoken, and did not himself learn to speak for a long time. After his father died and he belonged altogether to Joe's household, he hardly ever spoke at all. He was scolded and pushed about by everybody, but he never thought of resisting; it was not in his nature to fight. The children did what they pleased to him, and besides their abuse he had to bear the woman's scoldings, especially when she was in a bad temper about the neat little house across the stream. But Rudi did not rebel, for he had the feeling that the whole world was against him, so what good would it do? With all this the boy in time grew so shy that it seemed as though he hardly noticed what was going on about him,

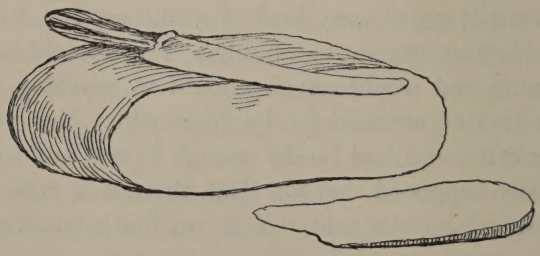
and he usually gave no answer when any one spoke to him. He seemed, in fact, to be always looking for some hole that he might crawl into, where he would never be found again.

So it had come about that the older children, Jopp, Hans, Uli, and the girl Lisi, often said to him, "What a stupid Rudi you are!" and the four little ones began saying it as soon as they could talk. As Rudi never tried to deny it, all the people in time assumed that it must be so, and he was known throughout the neighborhood simply as "Stupid Rudi." And it really seemed as though the boy could not attend to anything properly as the other children did. If he was sent along with the other boys to herd cows, he would immediately hunt up a hedge or a bush and hide behind it. There he would sit trembling with fear, for he could hear the other boys hunting him and calling to him to come and join their game. The games always ended with a great deal of thumping and thrashing, of which Rudi invariably got the worst, because he would not defend himself, and, in fact, could not defend himself against the many stronger boys. So he crept away and hid as quickly as he could; meanwhile his cows wandered where they pleased and grazed on the neighbors' fields. This was sure to make trouble, and all agreed that Rudi was too

stupid even to herd cows, and no one would engage him any more. In the field work there was the same trouble. When the boys were hired to weed potatoes they thought it great fun to pelt each other with bunches of potato blossoms, — it made the time pass more quickly, — and of course each one paid back generously what he got. Rudi alone gave back nothing, but looked about anxiously in all directions to see who had hit him. That was exactly what amused the other boys; and so, amid shouts and laughter, he was pelted from all sides, — on his head, his back, or wherever the balls might strike. But while the others had time to work in the intervals, Rudi did nothing but dodge and hide behind the potato bushes. So at this work he was a failure, too, and young and old agreed that Rudi was too stupid for any kind of work, and that Rudi would never amount to anything. As he could earn nothing and would never amount to anything, he was treated accordingly by Joe's wife. Her own four little ones had hardly enough to eat, and so it usually happened that for Rudi there was nothing at all and he was told, "You can find something; you are old enough."

How he really existed no one knew, not even Joe's wife; yet he had always managed somehow. He never begged; he would not do that; but many

a good woman would hand out a piece of bread or a potato to the poor, starved little fellow as he went stealing by her door, not venturing to look up, much less to ask for anything. He had never in his life had enough to eat, but still that was not so hard for him as the persecution and derision he had to take from the other boys. As he grew older he became more and more sensitive to their ridicule, and his main thought at all times was to escape notice as much as possible. As he was never seen to take any part with the other children in work or play, people took it for granted that he was incapable of doing what the others did, and they declared that he was growing more stupid from day to day.



CHAPTER II

IN THE UPPER PASTURE

On a pleasant summer afternoon when the flies were dancing gayly in the sun, all the boys and girls of the Hillside were running about so excitedly that it was evident there was something particular on hand for that day. Jopp, the oldest one of them all, was leader of the assembly, and when all the company had come together he announced that they would now go to the dairy hut in the upper pasture, for this was the day for a "cheese party." But first of all they must decide who was to stay below and watch the cows while the others went to the party. That was, of course, a difficult question, for no one was inclined to sacrifice himself for the sake of the others and stay behind. Uli suggested that they might for once make Rudi take care of the cows, and in order to keep him mindful of his duties

they had best thrash him beforehand. His suggestion met with approval, and some of the leaders were already starting off to find the victim, when Lisi's voice was heard shrilly screaming above the others: "I think Uli's notion is a very stupid one, for we'll all have to pay for it when we come home and find the cows strayed off. You don't suppose that if Rudi is too stupid to watch two cows he would suddenly be smart enough to take care of twenty! We must draw lots and three of us must stay here with the cows. That's the only way."

Lisi's argument was convincing. The company took her advice, and three of the number were sentenced to stay behind, Uli himself being one of those upon whom the unhappy lot fell. Mumbling and grumbling he turned his back upon the exultant throng and sat down upon the ground, — the other two beside him, — while the rest, with shouts and laughter, went scampering up the mountain, wild with expectation.

The boys were always notified by Franz Martin of the coming of cheese day, and they, in turn, never failed to remind him if they thought he might forget, for it was a gala occasion to them. It was the day when Franz Martin trimmed his fresh cheeses, after these had been pressed, a soft mass, into the round wooden forms. When the weight

was laid upon it some of the cheesy mass would be pressed out from the edge of the mold in the form of a long, snow-white sausage. This was trimmed off, broken into pieces, and distributed among the children by the good-natured dairyman. The festival of cheese distribution occurred every two weeks throughout the summer and was hailed each time with loud expressions of joy.

While the children were settling their plans Rudi had been hiding behind a big thistle bush. He kept very quiet and did not move until he heard the whole company racing up the mountain; then he looked out very cautiously. The three who had been blackballed sat sulking on the ground with their backs toward him. The others were some distance up the mountain; their shouting and yodeling rang out merrily from above. Rudi, hearing their shouts, was suddenly seized with an overwhelming desire to join the cheese party. He stole out from behind the bush, cast a swift glance over toward the three grumblers, and then, softly and lightly as a weasel, slipped up the mountain side.

After scrambling up the last steep ascent he came upon a little fresh green plateau, and there stood the dairy hut; close beside it Clear Brook went tumbling down the slope. In the door of his hut stood Franz Martin with round, smiling face,

laughing at the strange capers that the boys and girls were making in their efforts to get to the feast. They had all reached the hut and were pushing one another forward in order to be as close as possible when the distribution should begin.

"Gently, gently," laughed Franz Martin; "if you all crowd into the hut, I shall have no room to cut the cheese, and that will be your loss."

Then he took a stout knife and went to the great round cheese that he had ready on the table. He trimmed it off quickly and came out with a long, snow-white roll, and, breaking off pieces from it, passed them about here and there, sometimes over the heads of the taller ones to the little fellows who could not push forward, — for Franz Martin wanted to be just and fair in his distribution.

Rudi had been standing in the outermost row, and when he tried to push forward he got a thump now on one side and now on the other. So he ran from side to side; but Franz Martin did not see him at all, because some bigger, stouter boy always crowded in ahead of him. Finally he got such a fierce blow from big, burly Jopp that he was flung far off to one side, almost turning a somersault before he got his footing. He saw that the distribution was almost at an end and that he was not to

get even a tiny bit of cheese roll, so he did not propose to get any more thumps. He went off by himself down the slope, where some young fir trees stood, and sat down under them. On the tallest of these trees a little bird was whistling forth gayly into the bright heavens, as though there were nothing else in the world but blue skies and sunshine.

Rudi, listening to the glad song, almost forgot his troubles of a moment ago; but he could not help looking over occasionally to the hut, where the shouting and laughter continued as the children chased each other about, trying to snatch pieces of cheese from each other. When Rudi saw them biting off delicious mouthfuls of the snowy mass, he would sigh and say to himself, "Oh, if I could only have a little taste!" for he had never had a single bite of cheese roll; never before had he even ventured so far as to join a party. But it availed him nothing, even if he summoned forth all his courage, as he had to-day, and so he came to the melancholy conclusion that he would never in his life get a taste of cheese roll. The thought was so disheartening to him that he no longer heard the song of the little bird, but sat under the bushes quite hopeless.

Now the feast at the hut was ended and the revelers came down the slope with a rush, each

one trying to get ahead of the others, their eagerness leading to many a roll and tumble down the steep places. As Hans went shouting past the group of fir trees he discovered Rudi half hidden under them.

"Come out of there, old mole! You must play with us!" he shouted; and Rudi understood what he was expected to "play" with them.

He was to stand as block, so that the others might jump over him. He was usually knocked over at every jump, and he would much rather have stayed in his little retreat; but he knew what was in store for him if he did not follow their commands, so he came out obediently.

"How much cheese roll did you get?" Hans yelled at him.

"None," answered Rudi.

"What a simpleton!" yelled Hans still louder. "He comes up here expressly to get cheese roll, and then he goes away without any!"

"You stupid Rudi!" they shouted at him from all sides, and the big boys began jumping over him, so that he had hard work getting on his feet as fast as they knocked him over. Sometimes he would roll down the hill with a whole clump of them, and they would all continue rolling until some chance obstacle brought them to their feet once more.

After their boisterous descent they all ran in different directions, each one to seek his own cows. Rudi ran off by himself, far away from them all, for now he expected even worse treatment from the three unfortunates, because he had deserted them. He slipped down the hill to the swamp hole, and crouched down so that he could not be seen from above or below.

The swamp hole was a hollow where water gathered in spring and fall and made the ground swampy. Now it was quite dry, — a pleasant spot, where fine, dark red strawberries ripened in the warm sun that beat against the side of the hollow. But Rudi trembled as long as he was in the neighborhood of houses and herd boys, for the latter might discover him at any moment and renew their persecutions. He sat there trembling at every sound, for he kept thinking, "Now they are coming after me." Suddenly he was filled with a delightful memory of the little nook under the fir trees and of the whistling bird overhead. He felt irresistibly drawn to it; he must go back to that spot.

He ran with all his might up the mountain, never stopping once until he had reached the group of trees and had slipped in under them. The only opening in this retreat was on the outer side, toward the valley, so he felt safely hidden. All around him

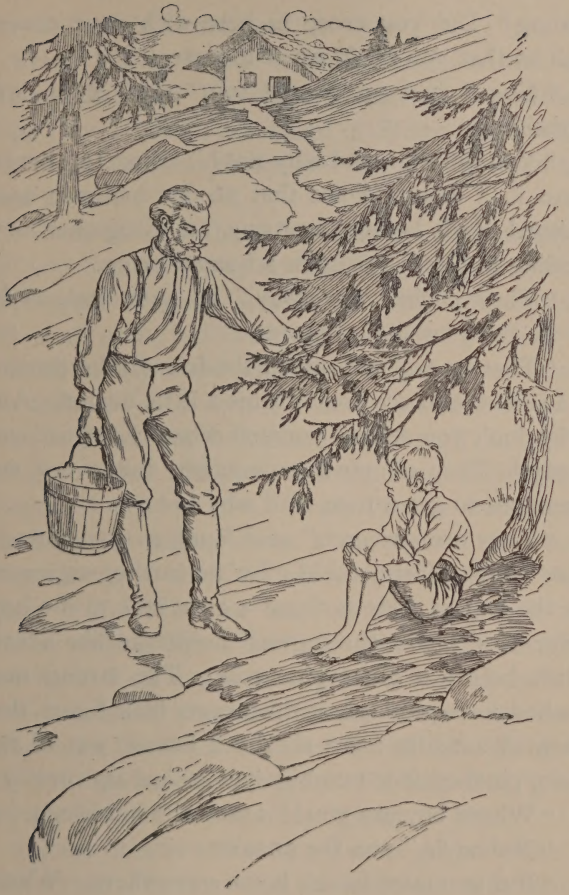
was great silence; no sound came up from below; only the little bird was still whistling its merry tune. The sun was setting; the high snow peaks began to glimmer and to glow, and over the whole green alp lay the golden evening light. Rudi looked about him in silent wonder; an unknown feeling of security and comfort came over him. Here he was safe; there was no one to be seen or heard in any direction.

He sat there a long time and would have liked never to go away again, for he had never felt so happy in his life. But he heard heavy steps coming from the hut behind him. It was the herdsman; he was coming along carrying a small bucket; he was probably going to the stream to fetch water. Rudi tried to be as quiet as a mouse, for he was so used to having every one scold and ridicule him that he thought the herdsman would do the same, or at least would drive him away. He huddled down under the bushes; but the branches crackled. Franz Martin listened, then came over and looked under the fir trees.

"What are you doing in there, half buried in the ground?" asked the herdsman with smiling face.

"Nothing," answered Rudi in a faint voice that trembled with fear.

"Come out, child! You need not be afraid, if you have done nothing wrong. Why are you



hiding? Did you creep in here with your cheese roll so that you could eat it in peace?"

"No; I had no cheese roll," said Rudi, still trembling.

"You did n't? and why not?" asked the herdsman in a tone of voice that nō one had ever used toward Rudi before, arousing an altogether new feeling in him, — trust in a human being.

"They pushed me away," he answered, as he arose from his hiding place.

"There, now," continued the friendly herdsman; "I can at least see you. Come a little nearer. And why don't you defend yourself when they push you away? They all push each other, but every one manages to get a turn, and why not you?"

"They are stronger," said Rudi, so convincingly that Franz Martin could offer no further argument in the matter. He now got a good look at the boy, who stood before the stalwart herdsman like a little stick before a great pine tree. The strong man looked down pityingly at the meager little figure, that seemed actually mere skin and bones; out of the pale, pinched face two big eyes looked up timidly.

"Whose boy are you?" asked the herdsman.

"Nobody's," was the answer.

"But you must have a home somewhere. Where do you live?"

"With Poor Grass Joe."

Franz Martin began to understand. "Ah! so you are that one," he said, as if remembering something; for he had often heard of Stupid Rudi, who was of no use to anybody, and was too dull even to herd a cow.

"Come along with me," he said sympathetically; "if you live with Joe, no wonder you look like a little spear of grass yourself. Come! the cheese roll is all gone, but we 'll find something else."

Rudi hardly knew what was happening to him. He followed after Franz Martin because he had been told to, but it seemed as though he were going to some pleasure, and that was something altogether new to him. Franz Martin went into the hut, and taking down a round loaf of bread from an upper shelf, he cut a big slice across the whole loaf. Then he went to the huge ball of butter, shining like a lump of gold in the corner, and hacked off a generous piece. This he spread over the bread and then handed the thickly buttered slice to Rudi. Never in all his life had the boy had anything like it. He looked at it as though it could not possibly belong to him.

"Come outside and eat it; I must go for water," said Franz Martin, while he watched with twinkling eyes the expression of joy and amazement

on the child's face. Rudi obeyed. Outside he sat down on the ground, and while the herdsman went over to Clear Brook he took a big bite into his bread, and then another and another, and could not understand how there could be anything in the world so delicious, and how he could have it, and how there could still be some of it left, — for it was a huge piece. The evening breeze played softly about his head and swayed the young fir trees to and fro, where the little bird was still sitting on its topmost branch and singing forth into the golden evening sky. Rudi's heart swelled with unknown happiness and he felt like singing with the little bird.

Franz Martin had meanwhile gone back and forth several times with his little pail. Each time he had stood awhile by the stream and looked about him. The mountains no longer glowed with the evening light, but now the moon rose full and golden from behind the white peaks. The herdsman came back to the hut and stood beside Rudi, who was still sitting quietly in the same spot.

"You like it here, do you?" he asked with a smile. "You have finished your supper, I see. What do you say to going home? See how the moon has come to light your way."

Rudi had really had no thought of leaving, but now he realized that it would probably be necessary.

He arose, thanked Franz Martin once more, and started off. But he got no farther than the little fir trees; something held him back. He looked around once more, and finding that the herdsman had gone into the cottage and could not see him, he slipped in quickly under the shadowy bushes. Franz Martin was the only person in all the world who had ever been kind or sympathetic toward him. This had so touched the boy that he could not go away; he felt he must stay near this good man. Hidden by the branches, Rudi peeped through an opening to see if he might not get another glimpse of his friend.

After a little while Franz Martin did come out again. He stood before the door of his hut and with folded arms looked out over the silent mountain world as it lay before him in the soft moonlight. The face of the herdsman, too, was illumined by the gentle light. Any one seeing the face at that moment, with its expression of peaceful happiness, would have been the better for it. The man folded his hands; he seemed to be saying a silent evening prayer. Suddenly he said in a loud voice, "God give you good night," and went into his hut and closed the door. The good-night message must have been for his old friends the mountains, and the people whom he held in his heart, though he

could not see them. Rudi had been looking on with silent awe. If Franz Martin attracted every one who ever knew him by his serene, pleasant ways, what love and admiration must he have aroused in the heart of little Rudi, whose only friend and benefactor he was!

When all was dark and quiet in the hut, Rudi rose and ran down the mountain as fast as he could.

It was late, and there was no light to be seen in the cottage; but he did not mind, for he knew the door was never locked. He went quietly into the house and crept into his bed, which he shared with Uli. The latter was now sleeping heavily, after having expressed his satisfaction at Rudi's absence by exclaiming, "How lucky that Rudi is getting too stupid even to find his bed! I have room to sleep in comfort for once."

Rudi lay down quietly, and until his eyes closed he still saw Franz Martin before him, standing in the moonlight with folded hands. For the first time in his life Rudi fell asleep with a happy heart.

CHAPTER III

A MINISTERING ANGEL

The following day was Sunday. The community of the Hillside belonged to the Beckenried church in the valley. It was a long walk to church, but the children were obliged to go to Sunday school regularly, for the pastor was stern in insisting that the children must be properly brought up. So on that day the whole troop wended its way as usual down the hill, and soon they were all sitting as quietly as possible on the long wooden benches in church. Other groups had assembled; the pastor got them all settled, and then began. He said that he had told them the last time about the life hereafter, and as his glance fell on Rudi, he continued: "Now, Rudi, I will ask you something that you can surely answer, even if we cannot expect much of you. Where will all good Christians — even the poorest and lowliest of us, if we have led good lives — finally be so happy as to know no more sorrow?"

"In the hut of the high pasture," Rudi replied without hesitating.

But he heard snickering all about him and looked around timidly. Mocking faces met him on every side and the children all seemed bursting with suppressed laughter. Rudi bent down his head as though he wished to crawl into the floor. Of the pastor's previous lesson he had heard nothing, because he had been engaged the whole hour in dodging sly attacks from the rear. Now he had answered the question entirely from his own experience.

The pastor looked at him steadily; but when he saw that Rudi had no thought of laughing, but was sitting there in fear and mortification, he shook his head doubtfully and said, "There is nothing to be done with him."

When the lesson was over the whole crowd came running after Rudi, laughing noisily and shouting, "Rudi, were you dreaming of the cheese party in Sunday school?" and "Rudi, why didn't you tell about cheese rolls?"

The boy ran away like a hunted rabbit, trying to escape from his noisy tormentors. He ran up the hill, where he knew the others would not pursue him, for they meant to pass the pleasant summer afternoon down in the village.

He ran farther and farther up the mountain. For all his trials he had now a solace: he could fly to the upper pasture and console himself with the

sight of Franz Martin's friendly face. There he could sit very quietly in his little retreat and be safe from pursuit. As he sat there to-day under the fir trees, the little bird was again singing overhead. The snow peaks glistened in the sun, and here and there a clear mountain stream made its way between green slopes of verdure.

Rudi breathed a sigh of contentment as he looked over the peaceful scene. He forgot all about his recent tormentors and was conscious only of the one wish, — that he might never have to leave this spot again. Now and then he got a glimpse of Franz Martin, for whom he was continually watching. Then he would crouch down and make himself as small as possible, for he had the feeling that if Franz Martin should find him here again he might think he had come to get another piece of bread and butter, while really it was only because this man was the first and only person who had ever been friendly and kind to him, so that he felt happier in his presence than anywhere else in the world. The herdsman did not discover him, and Rudi sat in his little nook until the stars came out and Franz Martin stepped forth from his hut again and said, "God give you good night."

Then at last Rudi ran home. It was late, as on the evening before, when he found his bed; but

to-night he was hungry, for he had had nothing since morning. He did not mind it very much, though, he had been so happy on the mountain.

So a whole week passed. Whenever Rudi thought no one was watching him he ran up the alp and slipped into his hiding place. There he would observe the doings of the herdsman from moment to moment, and never would he leave his hiding place until Franz Martin had said, "God give you good night." It seemed to him now as though the evening blessing were meant for him, too.

The days that followed were exceptionally warm. The sun rose each morning in a sky as cloudless as that in which it had sunk the night before. The pasturage was especially fine, and Franz Martin got such rich milk from the cows that he turned out most excellent cheeses. That pleased him, and his happy whistle could be heard from earliest dawn to evening as he went about his work. On Saturday of this week he was at work even earlier than usual, for this was one of the days when he was to carry three or four of the cheeses down to the lake and have them shipped. Soon he had them packed and strapped to his back and was trudging in happy mood down the mountain, alpenstock in hand. It was the hottest day of the whole summer.

The farther down he went the more he was oppressed by the excessive heat, and many times he said to himself, "Oh, how glad I shall be to get back to my hut this evening in the cool upper air! Down here it is like an oven."

He reached the landing place just as the boat came in that was to carry the cheese. His business was quickly settled, and then he stood a moment thinking whether he should go right back up the mountain or stop for something to eat. But he had no appetite; his head was hot and heavy and he wished only to get back. Then some one touched his arm. It was one of the ship hands who had just helped load the boat.

"Come, Franz Martin; it is a warm day; we'll go in the shade and have a glass of wine," he said, as he drew the herdsman toward the tavern where the big trees stood.

Franz Martin was hot and thirsty and was not averse to sitting down a little while in the shade. He emptied his glass at one draught; but in a few moments he rose, saying that he felt quite oppressed by this heavy lower air, and that he was used to cold milk and water and not to wine. He took leave of his companion and started off with long strides up the mountain. But never had he found the ascent so difficult. The noonday sun beat upon

his head, his pulse throbbed, and his feet were so heavy that he could scarcely lift them. But he kept on resolutely. The steeper the alp the longer grew his strides, and he spurred himself on with the prospect that now there was only an hour, now a half hour, and at last only a quarter hour of hot climbing before him; then he would be at home and could lie down to rest on the fresh hay.

Now he had reached the last steep ascent. The sun burned like fire on his head; suddenly all grew dark before his eyes; he swayed and fell heavily to the ground — he had lost consciousness.

When the milker came in the evening he found that Franz Martin had not yet returned. He set the milk down in the corner and went away; he never thought of looking about for the dairyman. But there was some one else there who had been looking for Franz Martin for a long time, and that was Rudi. The boy had been sitting in his retreat for several hours. He knew every step the herdsman had to make and how his duties followed one after another; he was very much surprised to see how long Franz Martin left the milk standing to-day, for he had always poured it immediately into the various vessels. Some of it, for buttering, was poured into the big round pans and left to stand

until all the cream rose to the top in a thick layer; the rest of it was poured into the cheese kettle. All this Rudi had seen from day to day through the open house door.

Still the herdsman did not come. The boy began to feel that there was something wrong. He came out very softly from his hiding place and went toward the hut. Here all was still and deserted, in the lower room as well as in the hayloft above. There was no fire crackling under the kettle; not a sound was to be heard; everything seemed dead. Rudi ran anxiously around the outside of the hut, up and down, and in all directions. Then, suddenly, down on the path he spied Franz Martin lying on the ground. He ran toward the spot. There lay his friend with closed eyes, groaning and languishing in great distress. He was fiery hot and his lips were dry and hard. Rudi stood and stared for a moment, pale with fright, at his benefactor. Then he ran down the mountain as fast as he could run.

Franz Martin had been lying on the ground unconscious for many hours; a terrible fever had come upon him. He was tortured by awful thirst. Now and then it seemed to him in his fever that he was coming to water and was about to bend over and drink. In his efforts to get at the water he would wake up for a moment, for it had only

been delirium. Then he found himself still lying on the ground, unable to move, and longing in vain for a drop of water. He would lose consciousness again and dream he was lying down in the swamp where he had seen the fine strawberries as he passed this morning. There he saw them hanging still. Oh, how he longed for them! He put out his hand, but in vain, — he could not reach them. But presently he had one in his mouth; an angel was kneeling beside him and had given it to him, — one, and another, and another. Oh, how good the juice tasted in his parched mouth! Franz Martin licked and smacked his lips over the refreshing morsel. He awoke. Was it really true? was he really awake? It was no dream; there knelt the angel beside him and laid another big, juicy strawberry in his mouth.

"Oh, you good angel, another one!" said Franz Martin softly; but not one only, — five, six, the angel put into his mouth, and Franz Martin eagerly devoured them. Suddenly a look of pain shot over his face; he laid his hand on his forehead and could only murmur, "Water," before he became quite unconscious again; he could not even eat the last strawberry.

He dreamed most horrible things: his head grew as big as his very largest ball of butter, and

then grew still larger and so very heavy that he thought in terror, "I shall not be able to carry it alone; they will have to hold it up with props, — like an overloaded apple tree." And then he felt quite plainly that his head was full of gunpowder; some one had lighted it from behind and now it was burning with awful fury and soon would blow everything to pieces. Then suddenly Clear Brook came running down over his brow, cool and invigorating, then over his whole face and into his mouth; and Franz Martin swallowed and swallowed, and awoke to consciousness.

It was quite true, — shower after shower of icy water ran over his face; then he felt something at his mouth like a little bowl, and he greedily drank the cool water. Over him were the twinkling stars. These he could see plainly, and also that he was still lying out on the open ground. But it could not be Clear Brook that was flowing over him and giving him drink. He could not make out what it was, but it felt very good and refreshing, and he murmured gratefully, "O blessed Father, how I thank you for your kindness and for this ministering angel!"

At last he felt something on his brow, so cool and comforting that he said, "Now the fire cannot get through," and contentedly fell asleep and dreamed no more.

CHAPTER IV

AS THE MOTHER WISHES IT

The sun was rising in splendor from behind the high peaks when Franz Martin opened his eyes and looked about him confusedly. He shivered a little, — he felt chilly. He wanted to sit up, but his head was heavy and dull. He put his hand to his brow; it seemed as though there was something lying on it. And he was not mistaken; sixfold, wet and heavy, his big kerchief that he had left in the hut lay upon his head. He pushed it away, and as the cool morning breeze played across his brow he felt so refreshed and strengthened that he sat up quickly and looked about him. He met a pair of big, serious eyes fixed steadfastly upon him.

"Are you here, Rudi?" he asked in surprise. "How did you get up so early? But now that you are here, come closer, so that I can lean on your shoulder; I am dizzy and cannot get up alone."

Rudi sprang up from his seat and went close to the herdsman. He braced his feet on the ground

with all his might so that Franz Martin would have a firm support in him. In the toilsome ascent to the hut the herdsman, still leaning on the boy's shoulder, began to recall one thing after another that had occurred to him; but there were various incidents for which he could not account. Perhaps Rudi could help him out.

On reaching the hut Franz Martin sat down on one of the three-legged stools and said: "Rudi, bring the other stool and sit down by me. But first get down the big jar and we will have a good drink of cold milk together, for I cannot make a fire yet. There is a little bowl beside it; see —" He stopped and looked about in surprise. "But what has become of it? I always set it up there; I don't know what has happened to me since yesterday."

Rudi's face turned fiery red; he knew well enough who had taken down the little bowl. He said timidly, "It is down there on the ground," and ran and fetched it; then he brought the milk jar, and set them both down before Franz Martin.

The latter shook his head in perplexity. As long as he had lived he had never set his bowl on the ground there by the door. He drank his milk silently and thoughtfully, filled the bowl afresh, and said: "Come, Rudi, you drink, too. You have done me a good service in coming up so early. Did

you think there might be cheese rolls to-day, and you would be here first?"

"No; truly I did not," protested Rudi.

"Well, tell me this," continued the herdsman, who had been looking now at the wet cloth that lay on the table, now at the little water pail that stood waiting at the door as if ready to start out, — "tell me, Rudi, did I have the cloth on my head when you came up early this morning?"

Rudi turned scarlet, for he thought that if Franz Martin heard all that he had done perhaps he would not be pleased; but the man was looking him so earnestly in the eyes that he had to tell all. "I laid it on your head," he began bashfully.

"But why, Rudi?" asked the herdsman in surprise.

"Because you were so hot," answered Rudi.

Franz Martin was more and more astonished. "But I was awake at sunrise. When did you come up?"

"Yesterday at five, or perhaps four, o'clock," stammered Rudi timidly. "The milker did not come until long afterward."

"What! you were up here all night? What did you do or want here?"

But the herdsman saw that Rudi was quite terrified. The visions of the night recurred to him, and

with fatherly kindness he patted the boy's shoulder and said encouragingly, "With me you need not be afraid, Rudi. Here, drink another glass of milk and then tell me everything that happened from the time that you got here."

Cheered thus, Rudi took new courage. He drank the milk in long draughts; it tasted delicious to the hungry, thirsty boy. Then he began to relate: "I came up here to sit in the bushes a little while, but only as I did every day, not on account of the cheese rolls. And then, after the milker had brought the milk and you did not come for so long, I looked for you, and I found you on the ground, and you were red and hot and seemed thirsty. So I ran down quickly to the swamp and got all the big strawberries I could find and brought them up to you, and you were glad for them. But you pointed to your head and wanted water on it. I fetched the little bowl out of the hut, and the pail, and filled them at the brook, and poured the water over your head and gave you to drink, for you were very thirsty. Whenever the pail was empty I went to the brook and filled it; but because the water ran off your head so fast I thought a heavy cloth would keep wet a long time. So I got the cloth out of the hut and laid it thick and wet on your head and dipped it in the pail whenever it got dry and hot;

and then at last you awoke when it was morning, and I was very glad. I was afraid you might get very sick."

Franz Martin had been listening with earnest attention. Now everything that he had gone through in the night was plain to him, — how he thought an angel had come to him with strawberries, and how he afterward enjoyed the water of Clear Brook as the real water of life. Franz Martin sat and gazed at Rudi in dumb amazement, as though he had never seen a boy before. Such a boy as this he had certainly never seen. How was it possible, he said to himself, that this boy, whom every one, young and old, never called anything else but "Stupid Rudi," had been clever enough to save his life, which had certainly been in great danger? — for what a fever had been consuming him the herdsman knew perfectly well. Had Rudi not quieted this fever with his cooling showers, who knows what might have developed by morning? And how could this boy, whom no one thought worthy of a friendly word, be capable of such self-sacrifice that he would sit up and care for him all night?

Tears came to the eyes of the big, stalwart man as he looked at the timid, despised little fellow, and thought this all over. Then he took the boy by the

hand and said: "We will be good friends, Rudi; I have much to thank you for and I shall not forget it. Do me one more favor. I am so weak and shaky that I must lie down and rest. You go down to my mother and tell her to come to me. Say that I am not quite well. But you must come back with her, for I have much to talk over with you to-day. Don't forget."

In his whole life Rudi had never been so happy. He ran down the mountain, leaping and skipping for joy. Franz Martin had himself told him to come again, and now he need no longer hide, but might walk right into the hut, and, better still, Franz Martin had said that he would be good friends with him. At each new thought Rudi leaped high into the air, and before he knew it he had reached the Hillside. Just as he was coming down from above in jumps toward the neat little cottage with the shining windows, Frau Vincenze came up from below in her Sunday clothes, prayer book in hand. The boy ran toward her, but for several moments could say nothing; he was quite out of breath with running.

"Where do you come from?" said the proper little woman disapprovingly, as she looked the boy over from head to foot. She thought that Sunday should be fittingly observed, and Rudi presented

anything but a holiday appearance in his little, old, ragged trousers and shirt. "I think I have seen you across the stream," she said; "you must belong to Poor Grass Joe?"

"No, I am only Rudi," the boy replied very humbly.

Then it occurred to the woman that Joe's wife had a foolish boy in her house, who would never be of any use, people said. This was probably the boy. "But what do you want of me?" she asked in growing astonishment.

Rudi had found his breath again and now delivered his message clearly and correctly. The mother was very much alarmed. Never before had her sturdy Franz Martin had any illness, and that he should now send for her, instead of coming down himself, was to her a very bad indication. Without saying a word she went into the house, carefully packed everything that she thought they might need, and in a few moments came out with a big basket on her arm.

"Come," she said to Rudi; "we will start right up. Why must you go back?"

"I don't know," he answered shyly, and then added hesitatingly, as though he were afraid it might be something wrong, "Must I not carry the basket?"

"Ah, yes! I understand," the mother said to herself; "Franz Martin thought that I should be bringing all sorts of remedies, and the boy was to carry them for me."

She gave Rudi the basket. Silently she walked beside him up the mountain, for her thoughts were troubled. Her son was her pride and joy; and was he really ill, — perhaps dangerously so? Her alarm increased as she approached the hut. Her knees trembled so that she could hardly keep up.

She entered the hut. There was no one there. She looked all about, then up into the hayloft. There lay her son buried in the hay; she could hardly see him. With beating heart she climbed the ladder. Rudi remained respectfully standing outside the door after he had shoved the basket inside. As the mother bent anxiously over her son he opened his blue eyes, cheerily stretched forth his hand, and sitting up, said: "God bless you, mother! I am glad you have come. I have been sleeping like a bear ever since Rudi went away."

The mother stared at her son, half pleased, half terrified. She did not know what to think.

"Franz Martin," she said earnestly, "what is wrong with you? Are you talking in delirium, or do you know that you sent for me?"

"Yes, yes, mother," laughed Franz Martin; "my mind is clear now and the fever is past. But my limbs were all atremble; I could not come down to you, and I wanted so much to talk to you. My knees are shaky even now, and I could not get very far."

"But what is it? What was it? Tell me about it," urged the mother, sitting down on the hay beside her son.

"I will explain it all to you, mother, just as it happened," he said quietly, as he leaned back against the hay; "but first look at that poor, gaunt, little boy down there, who has n't a decent garment to his name, whom no one thinks worthy of a kind word, and who is known only as 'Stupid Rudi.'"

The mother looked down at Rudi, who was watching the herdsman with much concern to see whether he was going to faint again.

"Well, and then?" asked the mother intently.

"He saved my life, mother. If it had not been for this little boy, I should still be lying out on the ground in deadly fever, or it might even be all ended with me by this time."

Then Franz Martin told her everything that had happened since the afternoon before, — how Rudi had stayed with him all night and had cared for him and relieved him from the consuming thirst

and fever, and had cooled the fire in his head. The cleverest person in the world could not have done it better, and perhaps no other person would have done it for him.

Again and again the mother had to wipe away her tears. She thought to herself, what if her Franz Martin had lain out there all alone and forsaken in his agony of thirst, and had been quite consumed by the fever, and no one had known anything about him!

Then such joy and gratitude rose in her heart that she cried aloud: "God be thanked! God be thanked!"

And for little Rudi she suddenly felt such a heart full of love that she exclaimed eagerly: "Franz Martin, Rudi shall not go back to Joe's wife! The boy has probably been only half fed, and she has let him run about in dirt and rags. This very day he shall go with me, and to-morrow I will make him some decent clothes. He shall not fare poorly with us; we will not forget what he has done for you."

"That is exactly what I wanted, mother, but of course I had to find out what you would say to it; now you have the same plan as I, and have thought it all out in the best possible way. There is nothing in the world like a mother, after all!"

And Franz Martin looked at her so lovingly and happily that it warmed her to her heart's core, and she thought to herself, "Nor is there anything in the world like a manly, virtuous son." Then she said: "Now you must eat and get strong again. I have brought fresh eggs and wheat bread, and I will go and start the fire. Take your time about coming down"; which Franz Martin found that he was really obliged to do, for he was still weak and trembling. But he finally succeeded. When he got down he beckoned to Rudi, who had been looking in through the door all this time, to come and sit at the table beside him.

"Rudi," he said, smiling into the boy's eyes, "do you want to grow up to be a dairyman?"

A look of joy came over Rudi's face, but the next moment it disappeared, for in his ears rang the discouraging words that he had heard so many, many times, — "He will never amount to anything," "He can't do anything," "He will never be of any use," — and he answered despondently, "I can never be anything."

"Rudi, you shall be a dairyman," said Franz Martin decisively. "You have done very well in your first undertaking. Now you shall stay with me and carry milk and water and help me in everything, and I will show you how to make butter and

cheese, and as soon as you are old enough you shall stand beside me at the kettle and be my helpmate."

"Here, in your hut?" asked Rudi, to whom the prospect of such happiness was almost incomprehensible.

"Right here in my hut," declared Franz Martin.

In Rudi's face appeared an expression of such radiant joy that the herdsman could not take his eyes from him. The boy seemed transformed. The mother, too, noticed it, as she set on the table before them the big plate of egg omelet that she had just prepared. She patted the boy's head and said, "Yes, little Rudi, to-day we will be happy together, and to-morrow, too; and every day we will thank the good God that he brought you to Franz Martin at just the right time, although no one may know why it was that you came up here."

The happy feast began. Never in his life had Rudi seen so many good things together on a table; for besides the omelet the mother had set out fresh wheat bread and a big, golden ball of butter and a piece of snow-white cheese, while in the middle of the table stood a bowl of creamy milk. Of each dish there was a generous portion for Rudi, and when he had finished one helping there was another ready for him.

When the mother was preparing to go home in the evening she said: "Franz Martin, I have changed my mind. Rudi shall stay up here with you until you are strong. He can fetch things and be useful to you. I will arrange matters with Joe's wife."

Franz Martin was satisfied, and Rudi's happiness knew no bounds. Now he was really at home with Franz Martin. That night, when the evening blessing was said, he was not crouching under the fir trees, but stood beside his friend under the starry sky, as the latter folded his hands and said, "Come, Rudi, we will say our evening prayer."

Reverently he, too, folded his hands, and when at the close the herdsman said, "God give you good night," Rudi's heart was so full of joy that he wanted to call out the blessing to everybody in the world, — "God give you good night!"

That very evening the mother went over to Joe's wife. The latter was standing before her house with the three boys and Lisi, and was trying to make out what they were telling her. They were all talking at once, and all she could understand was that it was something about Franz Martin, whose illness the milker had told them about. When Frau Vincenze explained why she had come, and said that she and her son had agreed to take Rudi

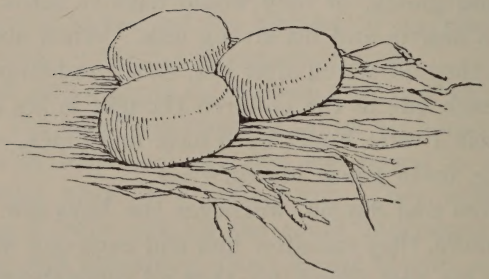
as their own child, the woman made a great ado, assuring her that they would do far better to take one of her three boys, who would be much more help to Franz Martin, a hundred times more, than Stupid Rudi.

And the boys all shouted at the top of their voices, "Me! me! me!" for they well knew how kind Franz Martin was, and what good things there were to eat in the hut on the mountain. But all their begging and clamoring was in vain. Frau Vincenze said very quietly that she was determined to have Rudi, that she knew him, and that he had more heart and sense than many another who called him "Stupid Rudi." Moreover, she wanted to warn the boys to be careful henceforth about their jeering and gibing, or they would have to settle with Franz Martin and his strong arm. When she left them they all stared after her, dumb and stupefied, and each one of the children thought in his heart, "I wish I were Rudi! he'll have fine times, — like a king, up in Franz Martin's hut."

From that day on, whenever the boys saw Rudi anywhere, they ran after him and each one wanted to be his best friend, for they all remembered the last cheese party when Rudi was so badly treated. But now he would surely have all the cheese rolls to himself, and so it would be a good thing to be

his friend. And later they did find it a good thing, for Rudi took great delight in dividing the rich harvest of cheese rolls among them all. He never ceased wondering at the way all the children had changed toward him, and at their not jeering or laughing at him any more.

When he got over being afraid of people, it turned out, to the surprise of all, that he was a very apt, nimble little fellow, of whom every one said, "Either he is not the same boy, or else we were all wrong in calling him 'Stupid Rudi.'"



THE LITTLE RUNAWAY

THE LITTLE RUNAWAY

CHAPTER I

UNDER THE ALDERS

The Alders is the name of an estate famed for its rich fields and smiling meadows and for its wealth of luscious fruits. Apple and pear trees stand in plenty on its well-kept fields, and if the year be a good one they stand at harvest time with drooping branches, and their red and yellow treasure gleams from afar like gold.

At some distance from the house and barn lies the great pasture land, where in the sunny autumn days eight sleek cows graze contentedly upon the fragrant grass, making sweet music as they wander to and fro, — for each cow wears a little bell about her neck. Sometimes the whole herd starts up together into lively movement; then the pleasant

sound is carried far down into the valley and gladdens the heart of the traveler upon the highway below.

Through the middle of the pasture runs a low stone wall that marks the boundary line of this farm; for the land beyond belongs to the estate of Lindenhof. Halfway down the wall, and close beside it, stand two great alder trees whose swaying branches cast pleasant shadows on the wall and give the estate its name of The Alders.

On the neighboring farm a mighty linden tree has stood since ancient times. It guards the door-yard and spreads its branches far out over the farmhouse and the big stone well. From it the estate takes its name of Lindenhof.

These two farms, though not especially large, are among the finest of all those that lie scattered over the mountain side in the parish of Buschweil.

One morning in September, as the sun lay warm and soft on the wall, a little girl of about ten years came running across the meadow. In her right hand she carried a long switch; with her left she was holding together the folds of her apron, carefully guarding something within that seemed to be of great value, for she would stop every now and then to open the folds, peep inside, and then draw them together again with a happy smile.

When she reached the wall she stopped and looked over into the neighboring pasture. Her blue eyes shone forth merrily from her little blond head, wreathed about with its two long braids, and fresh and pink was the little face that turned expectantly from side to side. Disappointed at not finding any one there, the little girl dropped the switch from her hand, and, reaching into her apron, brought forth a bright red apple, which she set upon the wall. Then she brought out another and another, and still others, until there was a long row of them.

"Ho! hey! Gretchen!" came a lusty cry from below; then, amid noise of shouting, tinkling bells, and fierce snapping of a whip, a boy came rushing up the slope. The cows followed with noisy accompaniment, for the vigorous whipsnapping had brought them along in quite a tumult.

"Why are you so late?" Gretchen called out to the boy.

"Because I — I had — there were so many things — well, I really don't know why it was."

With these words Renti had reached the wall and now stood breathless before Gretchen, who had seated herself on the top and was looking down at him.

"Now you see how it is," she said; "and the next time I am late you must be patient. You find that you can't always get here when you wish."

"Yes, you are right. I didn't consider before. And then it 's always so stupid here until you come. Oh, how hot, how hot!" he cried, throwing down his whip and brushing back his thick brown hair with both hands. Then he stretched out full length on the ground and gazed up into the blue sky.

Gretchen smiled down from her cool seat under the alders.

"It isn't hot at all, but you have run so fast. Where are the potatoes?"

Renti pointed to a sack that he had thrown down beside the wall.

"What fine apples!" he said, raising his head a little and looking up approvingly at the big red treasures set out in a row. Then he lay down again, turned his eyes to the sky, and in the fullness of his joy began to whistle.

Meanwhile the herds were grazing peacefully on both sides of the children. The gentle tinkling of bells was heard here and there, as the cows wandered to all parts of the meadow. In the alder trees the birds were singing gayly; a fresh mountain breeze swayed the branches and now and then blew away some of the leaves that Gretchen had gathered and spread out in her lap. She was weaving them into a wreath by fastening the stem of each leaf into the back of the preceding one. This

made a dainty little garland, for the leaves that Gretchen used were of a certain delicate kind. She would take the wreaths home afterward and lay them in the hymn book, where they would serve as bookmarks for the verses she was to learn for Sunday school.

Occasionally the little girl would look up from her work to see whether her eight cows were all in sight and grazing properly, neither disturbing each other nor being disturbed by outside causes. Gretchen knew all her cows by name and had come to know the character and peculiarities of each one in her two years of intimate association with them, — for this was not her first season at herding. She had been to pasture with them in the previous summer and fall and had herded them alone, — that is, with the help of Renti, who was always on the other side. At least, his cows were there; he himself was wherever Gretchen was, — on the wall, on her side or on his.

Renti was now lying unconcernedly in the sunny grass, not paying much attention to his cows, for he had great confidence in his strength and quickness, should anything happen among them.

Gretchen had looked several times toward one particular spot, where two of the cows were standing in a rather strange, unnatural manner; they

were not eating, and were holding their heads up in the air.

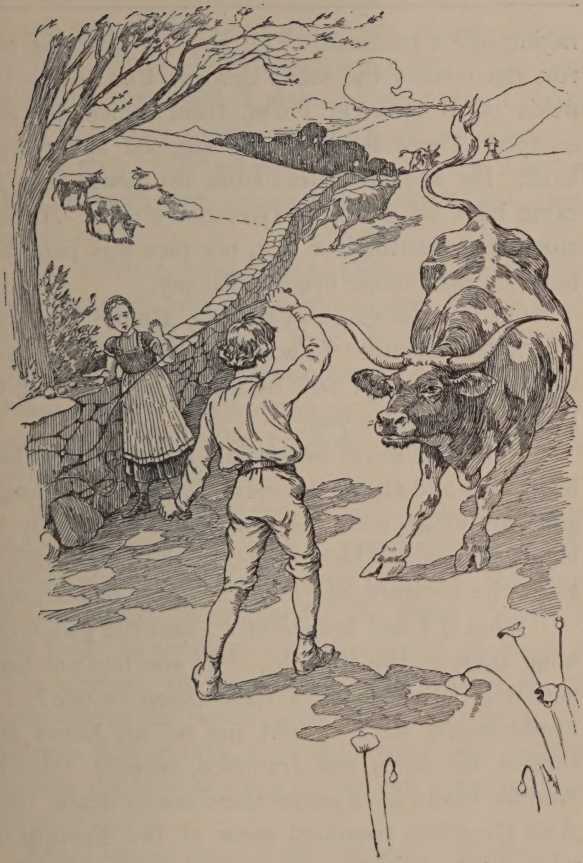
"Renti," she said, "I believe there is something wrong. Look how strangely Star and Brownie hold their heads, and they are not eating. Now Brindle is beginning to act frightened, too. Look, Renti!"

Renti sprang to his feet. At the same moment a big, terrible head appeared over the brow of the hill in Gretchen's field. Then the rest of the animal came into sight, — a wild, snorting steer that came rushing furiously up the hill. The cows ran about in terror. The bells jangled loud and wild, like storm bells. Renti's cows now began to rush about, too.

Gretchen jumped down off the wall to Renti's side. "O Renti! look, look! he is coming! Where shall we go?" she cried, pale with fright.

Renti made one leap over the wall. Then, setting up a terrible howl and roar, as though he were himself a wild beast, he charged down upon the steer, at the same time cracking his whip as hard as he could. The beast came on with increasing fury; Renti increased his noise.

Then the creature stopped, stood motionless. Renti howled, snapped his whip, and ran toward him. Suddenly the steer turned tail and galloped away. Renti dashed after him, still screaming and



raging like a madman. The beast, in growing terror, ran toward the steep descent that led to the fields of Broadwood Farm, from which he had escaped. There Renti finally stopped and turned back. He was breathless from the chase, but he came back on a run to Gretchen's side. As she stood there waiting for him, her face was pale, but her blue eyes shone bright with joy.

"Oh, but I'm glad you're back, Renti!" she said with a deep breath. "I was so frightened when you went after him, for fear he would catch you up on his horns and gore you."

"You must never be afraid," Renti assured her, breathless and almost voiceless, for he had well-nigh split his lungs with his screaming. Suddenly he laughed aloud as he thought of the extraordinary leaps the creature had made in terror of his noise.

"What if I had been alone!" said the girl, trembling anew at the thought. "If you had not been with me, where could I have taken refuge? He would surely have caught me on his horns and thrown me down and trampled on me! Oh, oh! And he would have gored the cows to death, too." And Gretchen trembled anew at the thought of what might have happened.

"Don't be afraid, Gretchen; I will always be with you," Renti said reassuringly; "and in the morning

I will always be here when you come. Depend upon it, I shan't be late half a minute ; I will manage somehow. But I mean to tell them at home what happened to-day, and they will send word to the farmer of Broadwood to tie up his steer so that he can't get out again ; so don't be scared any more."

The children went back to their place on the wall and Gretchen was at length quieted by the boy's assurances. The cows were grazing again with gentle, tinkling accompaniment, and everything round about them seemed so quiet and peaceful that before long the children had forgotten all about the disturbance.

Now the sound of church bells came floating on the wind from the villages round about. It was eleven o'clock, the hour when the noon bell rings in this region, the signal for the wives at work in the fields to shoulder their tools and go home to cook dinner. In the meadows the herd boys and girls began to bestir themselves, and here and there a thin wreath of smoke arose. As it curled up into the blue sky gay shouts and yodeling went up with it.

Renti leaped down from the wall. "Come, it is time for lunch!" he cried, running to the place where he had laid down his sack and bringing it forth.

Gretchen, with dainty care, arranged her garlands on the top of the wall, placing pebbles on them so that the wind might not blow them away; then she jumped down. Renti had emptied the contents of his sack on the ground. There lay potatoes, bits of wood, a piece of cheese, and several bricks, all tossed in together.

"You ought to wrap your cheese in paper," Gretchen told him, as she stooped to pick it up from the ground. "Look, it is all red from the bricks and covered with bits of wood."

Taking out her pocketknife, she scraped away the dirt, while Renti looked on with great relief, for the red and black speckled mass had struck him with pained surprise. Then Gretchen drew a little package from her pocket; that was her piece of cheese, wrapped in a clean, stout paper. She opened the parcel and, placing Renti's piece with her own, laid them together on the wall.

"What are the bricks for?" asked Gretchen.

"To make a better fire. See; we'll build a hearth with them." And Renti arranged his five bricks to form a sort of fireplace on the ground. Then he carefully heaped up chips inside and lighted them. The flame leaped up in an instant and filled the fireplace and Renti had to hunt about for more chips to keep the fire going. When the big flames

had subsided and only single little tongues came out here and there from the ashes, Gretchen approached and carefully laid the potatoes in the embers, each one in a good glowing spot; and wherever the ashes seemed to be turning gray, Renti blew upon them with all his might until they glowed again. He kept putting on dry grass and chips, so that the flames continued to burn between the potatoes.

Gretchen watched the crackling embers very earnestly. Renti had to run off to one side every now and then to cool his face, for with the blowing and poking it had become almost as hot as the fire. After some time Gretchen said, "There, now they are ready. Have you the shingle, Renti?"

"Yes, here it is," he answered, as he drew forth a little board and also a long willow wand from under the sack. The supple willow twig had been bent down from the top and fastened upon itself with a thread, so that it made a loop. With this the children drew out one potato after another from the fire, sliding them onto the shingle and then to the top of the wall.

When all the potatoes had been laid out in a row on the wall, Gretchen looked about for a comfortable seat, where the shadow of the alders was thickest, for now the sun was in the zenith and poured down with considerable warmth from the cloudless sky.

"Come, Renti; up here it is fine," she said, as she settled herself and laid out beside her some large leaves that she had gathered. Renti was by her side in a moment, and then they sat and watched the little clouds of gray steam rise from the potatoes and float off on the wind. But now they had waited long enough; Gretchen took up one potato after another and rubbed off the charred outer layer with one of the big leaves that she had at hand. She was careful, however, to save the crisp brown skin, for that was the part they liked best of all. Then their noonday meal began. The children sat up on their little elevation with a potato in one hand and a piece of cheese in the other, taking delicious bites now from one, now from the other. Overhead the birds were singing in the alder branches; across the meadow lay the golden sunshine; and in the grass at their feet the blue harebells tossed merrily in the breeze.

"Gretchen," said Renti, taking alternate bites from his right, then from his left hand, "would you rather be a king and sit on a throne and wear a golden crown on your head, or would you rather sit on the stone wall in the alder shade and eat baked potatoes and listen to the birds' singing?"

Gretchen hesitated.

"Well," she said, after some reflection, "a king can have whatever he wishes; so, besides having everything else, he could still sit on the wall and eat baked potatoes whenever he pleased."

"No, he couldn't; that wouldn't be proper; a king must always sit on his throne," declared Renti. "But I know" — and in his ardor Renti raised his fist high in the air and thumped it down on his knee —"I'd a thousand, thousand times rather sit here than be a king on a throne, for he could have nothing better than we have here."

"Yes, yes; it is true," Gretchen agreed. "I like it best here, too."

"I'm sure you do. Oh, how good this potato tastes! and do you hear that finch?"

Renti tried to imitate the bird's whistle. Then he took another bite of potato, but being obliged to express his happiness in some way, he beat time to the bird's melody by kicking his feet against the wall. "Surely this is the loveliest spot in all the world. Where could it be finer? Or do you think it may be more beautiful in heaven?"

"Yes, of course," replied Gretchen positively; "where all the beautiful white angels are, with lilies in their hands."

"I don't believe it is. Among so many strange people we'd be afraid and shouldn't know how to

behave; I'm sure it wouldn't be nearly so nice as it is here, where we two are alone together and can do just as we please, and are masters of the whole meadow and of the cows and everything. No, I'm sure it isn't so nice anywhere on earth or in heaven."

But Gretchen was not easily convinced.

"You have never been to heaven and can't be at all sure about it," she declared. "But come, let's have the apples now."

The first part of the meal, the more substantial portion, was now over, and as it had been of a rather dry nature it had made the children very thirsty; so the juicy, sourish apples tasted most delicious, and disappeared so fast that soon there were only two left. A few more bites finished these, too, and then Renti made himself comfortable on the wall and said, "That was the best dinner that any person could have." And Gretchen agreed with him perfectly.

The afternoon brought a number of unexpected happenings. Star and Brindle got into a quarrel because both wanted to graze in exactly the same spot. They began to horn each other and the children had to run down and separate them. Then they kept them grazing in different parts of the pasture for a while until the cows had got over their quarrelsome mood. Later Renti saw that Molly, the slender black one of his herd, was bounding across

the pasture toward the hedge beyond, and three or four of the others, seeing her, started in pursuit The whole herd seemed about to follow their example. Renti started after them with loud "Ho!" and "Hey!" and turned them back just before they reached the hedge, where they seemed to have no intention of stopping, although the high jump would certainly have had disastrous results for them. On the other side of the hedge the grass had been cut and was spread out in the sun to dry. It had wafted such tempting odors to Molly's nostrils that she had started off on a run to follow up the scent.

So one thing after another happened during the afternoon to keep the children busy. The cows were healthy and well fed, and toward evening, when they were no longer hungry, they were subject to all sorts of whims and notions that the children had difficulty in restraining. When the herd on one side was quiet something would happen in the other field, and the children ran back and forth, for they always helped each other. It was much pleasanter to do together whatever had to be done.

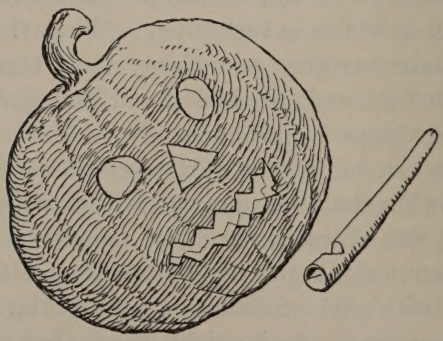
Meanwhile the sun had moved far on toward evening and was about to set. The mountains began to redden and all the little hills around seemed covered with gold. Suddenly a loud tooting sound was heard, first on the right hand, then on the

left, then from varying distances. It was the signal, blown forth on immense horns, to the herd boys and girls that it was time to bring the herds home for milking. And the cows seemed to know the sound, for they gathered in a group from all sides of the pasture and stood waiting.

"Good night, Renti!" "Good night, Gretchen!" the children called to each other.

Renti, with three or four bounds, landed in the middle of his herd, and cracking his whip and yodeling at the top of his voice, he ran on toward the Lindenhof stables.

Gretchen gathered up the two little garlands she had made and spread them out on the palm of her hand; then she, too, moved on toward home, accompanied almost to her door by Renti's loud yodeling.



CHAPTER II

THE TWO FARMS

The house at Lindenhof had a big, comfortable living room, with a green Dutch-tiled stove in the middle and wooden benches all along the walls. Around the stove there was also a bench, where an old gray cat usually lay purring lazily. Wide steps, that were like many little benches set over one another, led upstairs to the sleeping rooms. In this way there was abundant opportunity for sitting down in any part of the room, and this gave the place an air of ease and comfort.

The farmer and his wife had two daughters, one twenty, the other nineteen years old; but they were no longer at home, both having married in the previous summer, one soon after the other. They had both married well, for the young farmers whom they had taken to husband had farms of their own and were comfortably established. Now the father and mother were by themselves again, as in the beginning. At first they kept only one hired man, for

the husband said, "We 'd better hire day laborers in the busy season, and then be alone the rest of the time, than to keep several men in the house."

And the wife said: "I think so, too. I do not like the tramp of heavy boots about the house."

So the household went on in its old quiet way, and still the work was properly done.

But when autumn came the farmer said: "We must have a herd boy. The hired man cannot sit out in the meadow all day when there is so much work still to be done, and yet we cannot leave the cows out in the pasture all alone."

And the wife said: "That would suit me very well; for a nimble little boy would often be handy for me in the work about the kitchen, the well, and the shed. He might look after the chickens, too; I cannot call the man for all these little services."

"Then I will go and get one," said the farmer, reaching for his coat and his heavy cane. The alms commissioner always knew of boys to hire; he would go to him.

Now it happened that on that very day the butcher had sent his delivery boy to the commissioner with a message that a new place should be found for the boy, as he himself had bought a cart and would have no more need of him.

This boy was Renti. He was quite alone in the world, having neither father nor mother nor any one else who belonged to him. Where he had come from no one knew.

Nine years before, on Laurentius Day, a tiny baby boy, wrapped in a coarse cloth, had been left on the doorstep of the church. The sexton, coming to ring the bell for evening prayers, had found a bundle at the door, and on discovering that it contained a living child he had taken it to the pastor. On the following Sunday the little boy was baptized, and received the name of Laurence in honor of the saint on whose day he had been found. Then he was intrusted to the care of the old washerwoman Katrina, who kept him clean and decent as long as she lived. But she died after a few years, and then Renti passed from one hand to another. Sometimes he was treated kindly, sometimes quite otherwise ; up to the time of his tenth year he had never known how it felt to have a home, for he had never been kept more than a year in one place. In the last few years, since he had been able to do light work, he had gone to a new place almost every three months, wherever people happened to have need of him.

When the farmer of Lindenhof arrived at the commissioner's, the latter was at his door and

Renti was standing before him delivering the message from the butcher.

The farmer did not notice the boy especially, but began at once to state his wants, whereupon the commissioner drew Renti forward and said: "You have come at an opportune time. Here is a boy ready to go right home with you. And he will do what is right, won't you, Renti?"

The boy nodded his head. There was something about him that the farmer liked.

"Then come along," said the farmer.

So Renti trotted along beside him. Barefooted, with no other clothes than the little jean trousers and coarse shirt he had on, — for his little jerkin had fallen into rags, — Renti entered upon his life at Lindenhof.

The farmer's wife looked out in surprise when she saw her husband returning so soon with a boy. She scrutinized the newcomer more carefully than her husband had, for she knew the boy would be with her a great deal of the time, and she was particular as to the people she had about her. Renti had big brown eyes that looked out upon the world and its people with open, frank gaze. Thick brown hair waved about his brow. The woman liked him.

"I'll manage somehow about his clothes," she said to herself, for she surmised that the garments he had on were his only ones.

On the following morning Renti was at once sent out to take the cows to pasture. There he met Gretchen, who had but a few days before been initiated into the duties of herding and who was very glad to find that she was to have a companion.

Into this new life for Renti there came a joy that he had never known before, — he had found a home. Out on the sunny meadow, under the alders with Gretchen, the boy was happy. Joy shone in his eyes from morning till night, and when he was not talking to Gretchen he had to express his happiness in singing or yodeling.

The farmer's wife was kind to him. She had a neat suit — trousers and jacket — made for him for Sundays, and a white shirt to go with it. Then she taught him to wash carefully at the well every morning, and he was pleased and willing about it all, for he himself liked to look neat. In his little room there was a real bed, such as he had never had before, and no one was ever cross to him now, as his former masters and mistresses had often been. So Renti was as happy as the birds in the air, and his whistling stopped only with their own songs, and probably would have continued all night if the housewife had continued her demands for wood and water that long. He always did the kitchen errands at night, for the housewife was

systematic and wanted everything made ready for the next morning.

Often when the boy's whistle was heard at night in the stable, the shed, or the henhouse, the farmer, hearing it, would say: "Do send the boy to bed. His workday should be over by this time."

But the wife would answer: "Work never hurts any one; he gets sleep enough, and his whistling shows that he is not unhappy."

Then the farmer was satisfied, and his wife was glad that she could have her own way with the boy, and that he was cheerful and content. When winter came she proposed that they keep him, for she would have work for him when he was not in school, and when spring came and they had to take laborers she would have extra work in the kitchen and would find the boy very useful. The work of carrying meals to the field hands three times a day was alone worth keeping him for.

In his various duties the boy was often with Gretchen, for she had many of the same tasks as he had, and the two estates ran side by side. In the summer the children were sent to the fields to glean after the harvesters. They had discovered that it was much pleasanter to do this work together, first in one field, then in the other, than to do it alone. So it was with many of their tasks,

and they were much together. But they were happiest when autumn came and they were sent to pasture with the herds. Renti had become so familiar with the life at Lindenhof that he knew every cow by looks and disposition; he had become so well acquainted with the hens that he could pick out any egg and tell just where and when it had been laid. It took close watching to keep track of the eggs, for the hens liked to lay in secret places. Every creature, large or small, that belonged to the farm was more familiar to Renti than to the farmer himself, or to any hired man that they had ever had on the place.

At The Alders life went on in the same quiet, orderly way as at Lindenhof. In fact, there had always been great similarity in the manner of running the two farms. In the stables there were always eight cows, and if either of the farmers had seen fit to have nine, then there would have been no sleep for the other until he, too, had nine cows in his stall; for it was an old custom to have everything alike on the two farms.

The farmers were the best of neighbors, however, and there never was a thought of unpleasant rivalry between them. Each was content to have everything remain just as it had always been in the fathers' and grandfathers' and great-grandfathers' time.

It had happened, strangely enough, that on both occasions when there was a christening party at Lindenhof there was one on the same Sunday at The Alders, — with this difference, however, that the babies christened at Lindenhof were both girls, while at The Alders they were boys. Hannes had come first, and then, a year later, Uli, — the boys being now in their twentieth and nineteenth years. But the most important difference between the two households was, that while the number of children at Lindenhof remained at two, a third child had come to the other family years afterward. A little girl had made a late but by no means unwelcome appearance, proving a great joy to the family as the years went on. She was a winsome, happy child and did credit to the careful training of her parents, for they were proper people, both of the opinion that their first care should be to educate their children to a decent, orderly life.

Regularly on Sundays the family might all be seen going to church together, — father and mother in advance, with little Gretchen between them, and Hannes and Uli behind, all in their Sunday clothes and all looking so neat and honest that it warmed the pastor's heart to see them filing into church.

As little Gretchen grew along in this well-ordered life she won the heart of every one; for she was

pleasant and courteous at all times and sweet to look upon, with her bright, laughing eyes, blue as the cornflowers, and her long, blond braids like the golden grain above them.

When she had reached her ninth year her father said one day: "Gretchen is old enough, I believe, to herd the cows this year, and we might get along without a boy. It is hard to find one whom you can trust, and Gretchen is a sensible child and the cows are all gentle."

The mother thought that they might at least try it. Uli would, of course, go with her for the first day to see that she got along without any trouble, and was not afraid, — for she was a slight little thing, to be sure, to take care of the cows all alone.

Gretchen herself liked the idea of going, and Uli said: "She need not be timid. Our neighbors have a herd boy who seems gentler than most boys, and I will tell him to look after her."

So Gretchen started out a few days later, accompanied by Uli. In the neighboring pasture Renti was already at his post. Uli called him to the stone wall and made him understand that if anything should happen among the cows he must come to Gretchen's assistance. In return he should have plums and nuts when they came in season.

Now Renti needed only this to complete his happiness, — to have a companion in the meadow, — and by the end of the first day the children were such good friends that the boy would have gone through fire and water for Gretchen's sake. A more faithful protector could not have been found for her.

So the children passed the autumn season in daily companionship. When winter came they went back and forth to school together twice a day. Sundays they invariably spent together, for Renti was treated as a neighbor because he belonged to the household at Lindenhof. So he went to The Alders every Sunday afternoon and stayed with Gretchen until supper-time, — that had become a matter of course. And every Sunday afternoon had slipped by so fast that when it was over they wished it were just beginning; they had n't had time for half their plans and projects. Renti was skillful at carving wooden whistles and making lanterns out of pumpkins, and Gretchen had a supply of colored paper from which they manufactured whole cities, including the inhabitants, and boats with movable oars, and churches, and houses with swinging windows.

Then came the work of spring and summer, and the children met continually in the fields. When

they were not together each knew exactly where the other was, what he or she was doing, and when they would meet again.

Now autumn had come and the children were enjoying happy days in the meadow. There had been but few rainy days to keep Gretchen at home, for the season had been unusually fair. In wet weather Renti had to wander about alone, with a feed sack wrapped about his shoulders to keep off the rain. On such days he took care of Uli's cows also, after the latter had brought them to pasture in the morning. In this way he kept his pockets full of nuts. When Gretchen came out on the next day there was always a great deal to talk over, about how the cows had behaved, about the little birds in the alders and how they had crept into their nests, and about the big crows that had suddenly swooped down on the pasture, croaking so hideously that Brindle, in sheer terror, had run right into their midst, whereupon the whole flock started up and flapped about, frightening Brindle still more, so that she went galloping wildly about, and Renti had to catch her and stroke her head until she became quiet.

All these incidents were the subject of earnest conversation when the children were together once more under the alders. So the days passed, and

there were no happier children in all the country round than Renti and Gretchen.

October came, and the bright, sunny weather continued until past the middle of the month, so that the children still remained in the meadow all day without feeling cold, — only they went home rather early in the evening. On a Saturday afternoon of the third week black clouds began to pile up in the sky and the children started for home at four o'clock. A sudden darkness had come on, and a violent downpour of rain, or perhaps hail, seemed about to break forth. Gretchen was quite downcast, for she feared that snow and cold weather would now set in and put an end to the herding. But Renti was hopeful and thought that winter was still a long way off. Monday would be fair again, he said, and they would come out as usual.

They bade each other good night and hurried home with their herds, for the first drops had begun to fall and the sky was growing darker and darker. Renti, after reaching the barn and tying the cows in their stalls, scrambled about in all the corners, as he did every evening, to find the eggs. Presently he heard a furious storm beating down upon the barn. The rain and hail and wind were almost crushing the roof. He stood in the barn door holding the eggs in his cap, for he was afraid

they would be broken by the hail if he started for the house.

While he stood there the farmer was looking out of the kitchen window at the storm. His wife was blowing the fire that had several times been put out by the wind and rain. The farmer watched the gusts sweep by and said: "I have been expecting this. I've seen it coming for some time. It is hard on the fruit trees. Well, this makes an end of autumn and we may look for cold weather. The farmer of Broadwood told me to-day that he wants a boy for the winter. He means to get along with one hired man and a boy, for he has his two sons to help him. So I told him he might have Renti."

"You did!" exclaimed the woman. She stopped blowing the fire and looked around at him. "Why did you tell him that? Shall I do my work alone all winter merely to let the farmer of Broadwood have a good boy?"

"No, no," said the farmer in conciliatory tones; "I had no such thought. On the contrary, you are to have better help than you have now, — a young fellow who is stronger than Renti and can be of more use to you. I have a great deal of wood to cut this winter and shall need an extra hand. A young fellow of seventeen or eighteen

can do my work and can also help you in the kitchen. I have my eye on one."

"I was satisfied with Renti," said the wife; "but if you need an older hand we must give up the boy, for we do not need three servants." Then after a moments he added: "If Renti must leave us, I am glad that he is to have a good place. I should n't like to send him away without knowing what sort of people he goes to, but the household at Broadwood is well managed. But whom will you get in his place? I hope it will be some one fit to have in the kitchen."

"Yes, he will do very well," said the farmer. "He is young enough to do little errands about the house and kitchen, but at the same time strong and sturdy. For carrying wood and water he will be better than a little boy. To-morrow he is to come along this way, and if we wish him to, he will stay. They will expect Renti at Broadwood to-morrow evening."

The wife thought this was hurrying matters somewhat, but her husband explained that as the herding season was now ended the wood felling might as well begin at once.

So they decided to let Renti go on the morrow and to keep the young man when he came, for the wife remembered, after her husband had mentioned

the youth's name and described him somewhat, that she had seen him once or twice, and that he came of a decent family in one of the neighboring parishes.

The storm had now abated and the farmer went out to see that everything was in order for the night. At the same time Renti came running into the kitchen with eager, happy face, holding out a cap full of eggs toward the housewife.

"What a boy you are to find nests!" she said, as she bustled about the hearth. "To-morrow you are to go to Broadwood, Renti. There you will have plenty of eggs to hunt, for they keep a large flock of chickens, the finest in this whole region."

Renti stared at the woman and almost dropped the eggs from his hand, but he did not utter a word.

"Lay the eggs on the table," said the woman; "I haven't time to put them away now; and bring in a stick of wood. You needn't go for water while it rains so hard. Then come in to supper."

Renti laid down his cap and went out to the shed. He was paralyzed by the news he had just heard; he could scarcely lift the stick of wood, although he usually carried such a burden on a run.

The housewife looked at him questioningly. "I believe you are tired, Renti. Come, eat your supper and then go right to bed."

At the table Renti never once looked up, and for the first time since he came to Lindenhof he had no appetite.

"He is tired; I noticed it awhile ago, "said the wife in answer to her husband's puzzled look, — for the boy's spoon was not traveling back and forth in its usual way, in and out of the big bowl of sour milk.

"Pshaw! that would n't take away his appetite," said the farmer.

But Renti could not swallow his supper.

"Perhaps the storm oppresses him. Let him go to bed," said the farmer.

"Yes, yes; you 'd better go to bed," said the wife in friendly tones. "I will look after the shoes myself. Go and have one more good sleep in your comfortable bed."

Renti crept upstairs to his dear little room. He felt as though a heavy weight were upon him; he could hardly breathe. But after he was in bed and everything about him seemed just the same as it had always been, and always must be, he thought, he breathed more easily. Something would surely happen overnight to straighten the matter out. When things had gone on so long and so smoothly without change, they could not all be upset in one night. And with this thought Renti finally fell asleep.

Next morning, as the farmer and his wife returned from church, Renti came out of the barn to meet them as usual. On Sunday mornings, when he had plenty of time to scramble about all the corners of the barn, he always made new discoveries in the way of hidden nests.

"Now go and put on your Sunday clothes, Renti," said the wife. "After dinner you may run over to The Alders and tell them 'God keep you,' for you probably won't see them again for some time. It is a long way to Broadwood. Then you must come home for a timely start, so that you will reach your new quarters before nightfall. It would not look well for you to get there late."

Renti felt as though a thunderbolt had struck him. The morning having passed in its usual quiet way, just the same as all other Sunday mornings, he thought that the danger must be over and that things were to remain as of old. But now he was to be sent away, after all! He put on his Sunday clothes; dinner came and went, he knew not how; he was as if stunned. After dinner he went to the barn and sat down on the lowest round of the hay ladder. There he stayed for hours without stirring. He could not go to The Alders and tell them "God keep you." No, no, no! he could not go away! he could not!

The housewife, thinking he had done as she told him, packed his clothes into a bundle and then joined her husband in the sitting room, where they always sat together on Sunday afternoons. Here she waited for Renti to return.

When the clock struck half-past three and he had not yet appeared, she said: "He is late. He ought to be here by this time."

"He knows that it is Sunday, and that coffee will be on the table at four o'clock. He will be here," said her husband.

The wife went out to prepare the coffee. When she returned with the tray Renti had not come. She went to the door to look for him and called his name. He answered from the barn.

"If you were back, why didn't you come in?" she said. "Come and drink your coffee. It is high time that you were started."

Renti came in and gulped down his coffee, but he could not eat anything. The woman laid a piece of the fresh Sunday *Kuchen* into his bundle and held it out toward him.

"There, Renti; God keep you! Be a good boy and do what is right. Come to see us some Sunday and tell us how you are getting on," she said, as she laid the bundle on his arm. He extended

his hand to the woman, then to the man, without saying a word; then he turned and went out.

The wife went as far as the outer door with him.

Renti left the house without looking back. Once outside, he ran as fast as he could.

"It is better so, after all," said the woman, coming back to her husband's side. "He might have said a word of good-by; but it is better than if he had been sad at going, for then it would have been hard to send him away."

"You need not worry about him," said the farmer. "Youngsters always like a change. He is glad to get into something new."

Renti ran with all his might until he was beyond the house and land of Lindenhof. Then he threw himself down on the ground and wept and moaned as though his heart would break. Not a gleam of hope could he see before him, — not a ray of comfort.

The sky was covered with stars when he finally arose. Then he ran without stopping until he reached Broadwood. It took more than half an hour of fast running to cover the distance, — so far away from home was his new life to be.

CHAPTER III

GOING ASTRAY

When Renti arrived at the lonely looking house at Broadwood everything was quiet, and the door, which in country houses usually stands open all day, was sternly closed. As he approached, a big, ugly dog darted out of his kennel toward him, barking and growling angrily. Renti shrank back in terror. Fortunately the dog was chained, for he was in a fierce mood, being enraged at the arrival of so late a visitor.

The door of the house opened and a rough voice called out, "What's the matter out here?"

"It's — only I," Renti answered in trembling tones.

"Who is 'I'?" said the farmer. "Come closer. He will not eat you. Down, Turk!"

Renti came forward and said, "Good evening."

The farmer, seeing the bundle on Renti's arm, said: "Ah! you are the boy from Lindenhof. A

pretty time to arrive! They surely sent you away long ago. If you think we are going to allow you to vagabond and come home when you please, you are mistaken. Come in."

The farmer's wife had been trying to make out with whom her husband could be talking at this late hour. Every one else was in bed,—sons and farm hands,—for here the rule was, "Early to bed and early to rise." When she saw her husband come in with a boy she understood who it was.

"Send him right up to bed," she said, as she brought a little lamp and gave it to her husband. "You will have to show him the way and light his candle. To-morrow he will go without a light. He is to sleep in the room with Matthew, the young fellow."

The farmer led the way with his meager little light, and Renti followed him to a small room under the roof, where the hired man was already sound asleep. Renti undressed quickly and slipped into his narrow little bed; the farmer went away with the light. Renti realized that the bed was harder than the one he had slept in last, but this did not trouble him long. He was very tired and in a few moments was fast asleep. Then he thought he was under the alder trees with Gretchen, and the Broadwood steer came, and he charged down upon it and rescued Gretchen.

There was more noise and bustle about this new establishment than in the home he had just left. The Broadwood estate contained a great deal of woodland, and the farmer, with his three sons and two hired men, worked in the woods all winter. In the barn there was a team of stout horses besides the cows, and sometimes even the bad-tempered steer was put into harness, for there was much carting and hauling to do.

Renti was expected to fetch and carry and make himself useful in all the different kinds of work, in the barn, wood lot, or house. The summer vacation was over, and he was supposed to spend a number of hours in school each day, but in this matter the farmer was not very particular.

On Monday morning Renti was told to stay about the barn and help the farmer. At noon he was to carry dinner to the workmen in the wood lot and was to stay there and help for the rest of the day. Renti was quick, and being familiar with the work about the barn, he got along very well with his new master. At noon he carried a big basket to the woods, and after the men had disposed of the lunch they kept Renti busy running here and there, wherever they needed him. Now he had to push, now to pull, and to carry the tools back and forth continually.

But suddenly he disappeared. Loud voices called him repeatedly, but he did not answer. The voices grew angry; they threatened, they scolded, growing harsher and harsher. Renti did not come; he was by this time far beyond the reach of their calls. A feeling had suddenly come over him so irresistibly that he could not withstand it, — he must go to Lindenhof; and he ran and ran, without stopping, until he reached the barn. There he stopped and looked about him. Yes, the place was all unchanged: the big barn door was standing open, and he could hear his cows inside pulling the hay out of their cribs; his hens were scratching about as usual for seeds and grain, cackling contentedly.

The feeling that this was no longer his home, that he no longer belonged to the creatures he loved, was more than Renti could stand. He crept out behind the barn, where no one could see him, and threw himself down on the ground, burying his face and sobbing and moaning piteously. For a long time he lay there; it was twilight when he arose. Then he ran as fast as he could up to the pasture, and climbed onto the little stone wall. The wind rustled through the alder branches and shook dead leaves down upon him; everything else was very quiet. Renti sat motionless, staring into the twilight as though he hoped to summon forth some figure that was not

there. Presently the church bell rang for evening prayers. The sound must have aroused him. He leaped to the ground and ran across the meadow toward The Alders, where he stole around the corner of the barn and looked over at the house. Everything was quiet; not a person was in sight. He stood there until he saw some one coming out of the house. It was Hannes going to the barn. Then Renti started off and ran home, but it was quite dark when he reached Broadwood. When he entered the house he saw that supper was over and that the farmer, who was putting out his lantern, had just come in from his last trip to the barn. The farmer's wife stood beside him. She spoke first. "Here comes the vagabond! Do you think we are going to allow such conduct here? I wonder that you have the face to come back!"

Then the farmer spoke. "Where did you learn such tricks? I hear you ran away in the middle of the day. Did they allow that at Lindenhof? Be careful, my boy; if this happens again, you will rue it. For this time I will let you off, because it is your first day and you worked well this forenoon; but don't try it again! Now go to bed. Supper is over. Whoever is here in time sits down with us."

Renti went upstairs to his room. He did not mind going without supper, now that he had been

to Lindenhof. The next day the farmer took him into the potato field. Here he had to push the cart and sort over potatoes, picking out the poor ones and laying them in a separate heap for the pigs.

Everything went well through the morning. Renti worked diligently and the farmer was pleased with him. In the afternoon the wife said she wanted Renti to help her in the garden. She was going to put things in order for the winter and take up the plants that were not to stay outdoors. Renti proved especially quick at this work, for he had always helped the mistress of Lindenhof in the same task. He knew just what had to be done and took up one thing after another, even before the woman had a chance to direct him.

"How clever you can be when you want to!" she said, half in approval, half in reproach. "Don't you see how pleasant it would be if you would only behave as you should? You know how to do your work properly, and we are all friendly toward you; but you must not run away."

At four o'clock the woman packed a lunch basket and gave it to him. "Now carry the men's supper out to them. They are at the edge of the wood and it is not far. Come right back and you shall have your own supper. But remember to come back at once."

Renti did not come back.

"Scalawag!" exclaimed the woman angrily, when she found herself still working alone an hour afterward. It was now growing dark, and she gathered up her tools and went into the house.

When the farmer and his men came home to supper Renti had not appeared.

"Now you must teach him who is master," said the wife, after she had told her husband about Renti.

"Yes, he shall learn it once for all," he replied.

Supper-time came and passed and the workmen went to bed; only the farmer and his wife were still busy with their last duties.

At length Renti appeared in the door.

"Straggler!" the farmer called out angrily. "Where have you been roaming about?"

Renti said nothing.

"Can't you speak?" demanded the wife.

No answer.

"Do you know what you deserve? There, now perhaps you'll remember to-morrow!" said the farmer as he boxed his ears sharply. "Now go to bed."

On Wednesday Renti worked diligently, doing carefully whatever task he was set to. He held out bravely until twilight, then he disappeared.

When the housewife wanted wood for her fire she called him, but there was no Renti.

"What can we do with such a boy?" said the farmer in despair when he heard this last report.

"I had my suspicions from the first," said the wife accusingly, "when the farmer of Lindenhof offered him to you so readily. I suppose his wife had had enough of the rascal's tricks."

"He does his work very well when he is at it," said the man in a conciliatory tone; "but I really am curious to know where he wanders about." He opened the door once more and looked out.

"I am not," replied the wife. "I'm sure he has fallen in with some good-for-nothing boys who go tramping about the country, and that's why he won't tell where he's been. And what if he does work well? What good is he to us if he is always gone when we need him most? No, we cannot keep him if he goes on in this way."

Just as the farmer was about to lock the door Renti came running in. He had to go without supper, as on the previous night, and received a worse punishment than before, and a stern warning that if the offense was repeated something serious would happen.

On Thursday the farmer said to his wife: "Let him go to school to-day. There is nothing special

to do. Next week we shall have particular need of him, and if he is out too many days we may get a notice from the schoolmaster."

Renti went to school. He saw Gretchen for the first time since they had parted in the meadow; but he saw her only at a distance, for as soon as school was dismissed the boys all ran off together in one direction and the girls in another. That was the way they always did at school, — except that in the winter the boys ran after the girls and snowballed them; but there had not been enough snow for that this year. So at four o'clock Renti ran off toward Broadwood without having spoken a word to Gretchen. When he was halfway home and was still running he suddenly felt some power seize him from behind and turn him around. He faced about, and the next moment was running back over the same road faster than ever.

On the previous Sunday after church, when the farmers usually met and exchanged news items, Gretchen had heard that Renti was to leave Lindenhof and go to Broadwood. She was so downcast by the news that she did not speak a word at dinner, and Uli said teasingly: "What's the matter with you? Has your kitten run away again?"

But the mother said: "Don't bother her, Uli. She feels sad about Renti, because he must go away."

"Indeed, I don't think that's anything to feel sad about," protested Hannes. "At Broadwood he will be well provided for. It is one of the finest farms in the country. I wish we had a team of horses like theirs."

Gretchen felt certain that Renti would come in the afternoon. He always came on Sundays, and now that he was going away he would surely come to say good-by, and then she would tell him to be sure to come the next Sunday. But she waited for him in vain. She went to the window again and again to look for him, and still he did not come. Gretchen was very sad at heart. At the supper table her father remarked that it was not very mannerly in Renti to go away without saying good-by, — and that made her feel still worse.

Hannes and Uli agreed with their father and said they would not have thought it of Renti; but the mother suggested in her kindly way that perhaps he had wanted to come but was kept at home for some reason by the farmer or his wife.

For several days Gretchen had looked for Renti at school, but in vain. She knew, however, that he had left Lindenhof, for Uli had heard it directly from the master of Lindenhof. But to-day he had been at school. He had not spoken to her, and she had only seen him sitting on his bench on the

other side of the room, and after school he had run away with the other boys; but she was glad that he had been there and that she knew at least this much of him.

In the evening, when it was growing dark, Gretchen's mother sent her to the well with the bucket and told her to set it where Uli would see it and bring it in filled when he came. As Gretchen was coming back from the well she heard a strange sound, like suppressed moaning. It seemed to come from the barn, and she stood still and looked in that direction, but could not distinguish anything on account of the darkness. As she stood looking she heard the piteous sound again. She was frightened and ran toward the house.

Then she heard her name called, quite plainly, — "Gretchen!" She knew the voice and ran toward the barn.

There stood Renti with his face pressed against the wall.

"Renti! is it you?" said Gretchen in pleased surprise. "Why are you standing out here? Come in. Mother is in the kitchen. And why are you crying?"

"I can't come in; I am afraid. Everybody is angry with me for running away. I suppose she is, too."

"Oh, oh! you went away without asking?" cried Gretchen in sad, shocked tones. "But why did n't you come on Sunday? You will surely come next Sunday, won't you?"

"Last Sunday I could n't come, and till next Sunday is so long I can't wait. I have to run away every day."

"Where do you run, Renti? I never see you."

"It is always late when I come, and then I have to go right back. And you are never here. I run home every day to Lindenhof, and if no one is there to see, I go into the barn and look down through the feed holes at the cows. And Brindle always knows me, and says 'Moo' when she sees me. Oh, I can't endure it! I can't endure it!" groaned Renti, pressing his face against the cold stones as though to wring pity from them.

Gretchen's eyes filled with tears.

"If you run away every day, Renti, don't they whip you?"

"Of course they do. They'll whip me to-day, too."

"O Renti! then go home as fast as you can, or they will be more and more severe with you. And don't run away to-morrow, nor the next day, nor any more, so that they won't whip you," entreated Gretchen.

"I don't mind it very much," said Renti. "It isn't so bad as not running away."

He was still pressing his face against the stones, but at length Gretchen drew him away and entreated him to go. It made her heart ache to think that they would beat him, and she hoped he might be spared if he ran very fast.

So Renti turned and darted off down the road.

Gretchen went in and told her mother all about it, — how sorry she felt for Renti and how dreadful it was that they should whip him. The mother was sorry for the boy, too; but she said that he must learn to reconcile himself to the change and not run away any more. And she told Gretchen to tell him, if she saw him again, that he would be welcome on Sundays at The Alders, if they allowed him to come, but that he would certainly not be welcome if he ran away.

All this trouble about Renti lay heavy on Gretchen's heart. The boy was kept out of school the rest of the week. The farmer thought he could thus keep better watch of him and prevent his running away, until he was settled in the new life and trained to its ways. But every day — usually it was dark before he got a chance — he would manage to slip out, and away he would shoot like an arrow. The later it was when he escaped, the

later would he come home and the harsher would be the punishment that awaited him. On Saturday evening, after the boy had been chastised as usual and sent to bed without supper, the farmer told him: "I will give you one more week's trial. If you do not improve I will send you away."

The next day the woman said to Renti: "This afternoon you may go out with my permission; but see that you come back at a reasonable time for supper, as befits decent people."

Renti went away right after dinner, but he did not go to The Alders. He thought the family had probably heard of his running away, and he was ashamed to go. And perhaps Gretchen's father and her brothers would look accusingly at him and make him feel that he was not welcome. He felt the same way about the people at Lindenhof, and not for anything would he have gone into their house or let them see him.

It had begun to snow a little, and a cold, sharp wind was whirling the flakes about him in eddies.

Renti ran up to the meadow and sat down on the stone wall. He stayed there until it became dark, although he was shivering with cold and the wind almost blew him off the wall. When it was so dark that no one could see him, he went down to Lindenhof and wandered about the barn and the

stables like some restless spirit condemned to leave a place and yet unable to tear itself away. Several times he started toward home; then he would turn back and go all around the barn once more, laying his ear to the cracks and trying to hear some dear, familiar sound from his cows or his chickens. Finally he tore himself away and went over to The Alders. At the corner of the barn he waited a long, long time to see whether Gretchen would come out; but she was nowhere to be seen, so at last he ran off home.

The following week passed as the previous one had. If on any one evening Renti found no chance to run away, then he slipped out so much earlier the next day. Several times he came home so late that the farmer could not go to bed at his usual time. Then the boy was punished with exceeding severity, so that the farmer thought, "Surely this will cure him." But it did not cure him.

On the second Sunday, when Renti came down in the morning, the farmer said: "You may go as soon as you have finished breakfast. The alms commissioner knows you are coming; I told him about you."

The wife packed his clothes in a bundle, and when Renti rose from the table she gave him his package, and he went accompanied by the parting injunction

from both the farmer and his wife to "be better in his next place than he had been with them."

Renti went on his way utterly indifferent; he did not care where he might be sent next. When he reached the commissioner's house the man had not yet returned from church, so he waited. Presently the man appeared, and seeing Renti at his door, at once exclaimed: "What 's this I hear about you? A fine record you are making! You 'd better try to stay in your new place, for I don't know what will become of you after the next three months. The parish will not pay for you after that; so think over the matter a little. Now you are to go to the shoemaker's."

Renti felt that the commissioner did not feel friendly toward him, as he had formerly. He turned away in embarrassment and went on.

In winter the farmers did not usually take boys, as they did through the summer, for their clothes and keep, so no one had offered to take Renti on these terms; but the shoemaker had agreed to take him for a small sum to cover his board, since he always had use for a boy.

When Renti presented himself at the shoemaker's the man was sitting in the one room of the house, with his wife and three small children. He was mending a shoe, although it was Sunday.

"I suppose you are the new boy," said the woman, when he presented himself. "Lay your bundle in here. This is where you are to sleep," and she pointed toward the door by which he had entered. Renti understood that he was to sleep in the small cupboard-like opening that he had noticed on the left of the door. It was shut off from the rest of the room by a few narrow boards, with wide cracks between them, these openings being the only means by which light and air could enter the space. Within, there was nothing but a straw bed and a broken chair. This was to be Renti's bedroom. He tossed his bundle on the chair and ran out.

The poor shoemaker had no order or system in his household. He took Renti for the sake of the little money he would get for him, and because he needed some one to do his errands, as his own children were too small to be of any use to him. Aside from this he paid little attention to the boy and let him go his own way. He sent him to school mornings, because the boy's expenses were paid by the community and he would have been called to account if Renti had not gone to school; but in the afternoon, if he had long errands, or any other kind of work for him, he kept him out. In the evening the shoemaker always sent him about here and there, and Renti came home when he

pleased, no one paying any attention to him; but he never found anything to eat then, for he was always too late for the family supper, and of course nothing was saved for him. The others were glad that he did not come, for there was hardly enough for the family, and if he had come in time they would have had to give him something. To have anything left over was a thing unknown to them.

Renti was becoming sadly demoralized. In school he never knew anything because he never studied at home, being out every night. In appearance, too, this thin, ragged little fellow was much changed from the Renti of former days.

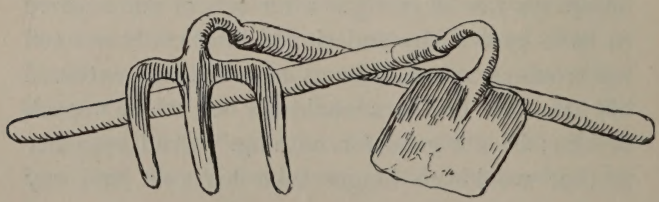
Gretchen was much worried about it all; her days had become very unhappy. When she heard the teacher saying so often, "Renti, you have become one of the very worst boys in school," she felt like sinking through the floor, for she always felt as though it were she herself being thus disgraced. She never had a chance to speak to Renti; he always ran away right after school and seemed to have grown shy and timid. She could not tell her troubles at home, for as soon as she mentioned his name her brothers would cry out, "Don't speak of him; he's a good for nothing." And even her mother would no longer take his part and say

in her kind way, "He may turn out all right in time."

Gretchen had but one hope, — that when Renti's time with the shoemaker was over and he was once more taken on a farm, where there was better management, he would turn over a new leaf; for she could not believe that he was really the good for nothing that her brothers thought him.

Evenings she often wanted to go out to see whether Renti might not be standing at the corner of the barn; she wanted to console him and urge him to do better; but her mother would never let her go. She said that Renti should not be wandering about at night, and if he had a clear conscience he would find their door on Sunday afternoons. If he did n't come then, Gretchen was not to watch for him.

So on many and many a night Gretchen went to bed with a heavy heart, and lay awake thinking of some way by which Renti could be led back to the right path.



CHAPTER IV

WHAT GRETCHEN LEARNED AT SUNDAY SCHOOL

The early days of March had come. In the meadows the primulas and white anemones were blooming, and in the fields the farmers were rushing their spring work with all their might, for each one wanted to be first to get his potatoes into the ground. Plowing and sowing were everywhere waiting to be done. There was much need of help, and boys were in demand once more. So it happened that Renti found a new place on the very next day after he left the shoemaker. Early on Sunday morning he started out with his little bundle; but it was a very different bundle from the one that he had brought with him from Lindenhof. He had had nothing new since the day he left there, and his old clothes were in rags. The little Sunday jacket, once so neat and stout looking, was now thin and shabby, and the fresh face and bright eyes that had gone with the jacket when it was new

wore quite a different look when Renti presented himself at Brook Farm, his new home. The place was so named because the farm extended along the margin of a large stream that flowed through the lower part of Buschweil. Renti reached the new place quite early, before the farmer had started for church.

Gretchen was happy once more that Sunday morning, for she had heard the alms commissioner telling her father, as they came from church, that Renti was to go to Brook Farm, and that it would be a good change for the boy, as there was very poor order in the shoemaker's household, and the boy had probably not had much to eat.

Afterward, when they were sitting at dinner, Gretchen's father began to speak of Renti. On Sundays he was always more talkative at the table than during the week, for that was the only day when they had plenty of time to eat and did not have to hurry back to work.

"Brook Farm," he said, "is an excellent place for the boy. They do not keep a hired man there and have few laborers; so he will be with the farmer a great deal and right in his sight. Perhaps he can thus be brought back to proper ways and made to forget his runaway habits."

"I doubt whether he will ever be cured of his vagabonding. What excuse had he for running

away at Broadwood? He had a good place there," said Hannes impatiently; for it irritated him to think of the two fine horses standing over there in the barn, while in their own stalls there were none, and he had always longed for one.

"Why should he run away anyhow?" Uli went on. "Hannes and I never thought of such a thing, and we had many a job that we did not exactly like when we were going to school."

Hannes and Uli were both a little self-righteous. They had always lived an even, proper life, and did not reflect what it had been worth to them to have a good, comfortable home and loving care.

"We must not lay it up against him that he ran away sometimes," said the mother charitably, "if he does right now. He is young, and has been knocked about a great deal. If he falls into good hands now, he may turn out all right."

Gretchen was very glad to hear her mother say that. After dinner she ran out into the meadow to gather primulas and anemones, and she remembered with pleasure the times when Renti and she had gone out together on Sunday afternoons to pick the flowers. Perhaps he would come again, if he got back into a proper life now and found he could do right once more.

All that day Renti roamed about, no one knew where, for he took good care not to let any one see

him. It was always the old places, however, that he haunted. On Sundays he often sat for hours behind the barn at Lindenhof, and there, hidden by the wood pile, he would dig worms and grubs for the hens and so coax them to him. They would eat the morsels from his hand with evident pleasure, cackling contentedly, just as they used to do when they still belonged to him. But sometimes, in the midst of his enjoyment, he would suddenly press his face against the wood and sob piteously.

On Monday morning work began. He was kept constantly under the farmer's eyes, as Gretchen's father had said, for there was no one besides the farmer and Renti to do the work in field and stable.

The wife had only two small children, and she herself carried in wood and water for the kitchen. So there was no twilight hour when Renti was sent out on these errands, and consequently there was no chance for running away.

After the field work and the evening chores in the barn were finished the farmer would say, "Now come in to supper and then go to bed."

The man rarely spoke to Renti, but the boy realized very well that he was keeping close watch of him. For a whole week there was no chance for the least attempt at running away. The boy was not sent to school, for the farmer said that the

early spring work was very urgent. All this produced a strange effect on Renti: he felt possessed by a passion to tear in pieces everything that was put in his hands and trample it underfoot.

If the work that he was doing kept him behind the farmer's back, he would suddenly throw down his tools, clinch his fists, and stamp on the ground like a madman. When the farmer turned round he would snatch up his tools and fall to work; but these strange performances did not wholly escape the farmer's eye.

The boy was not nearly so apt in his work as he had formerly been. If the farmer explained to him how a thing was to be done, one step after another, he paid little attention and forgot all the instructions before he got half through the task. It was plain that his thoughts were not upon the work, for he would stand staring vacantly into space, and sometimes his eyes would roll about in a wild way as though he were engaged in some fierce struggle.

"Keep your mind on your work and don't be so clumsy," the farmer often told him, but it did no good. Again he would warn him: "Be careful, my boy; if you don't do better, you will be sorry for it." But he did not improve. On the next Sunday the farmer said, "You must stay at home

to-day. If you go wandering about the country, your head will be full of crazy notions all the week."

Renti could not get away, for the farmer remained at home all day within sight of the house and barn, keeping his eye on the boy until it was time to milk the cows and feed them, and in these duties Renti always had to help.

The following week was even worse than the last one. Renti seemed possessed by some evil spirit that gave him no rest. One day the farmer directed him to sit down before the barn door and cut some potatoes that were needed for planting, he himself being busy in the barn where he could keep an eye on the boy. Renti had done this work before and knew very well that the potatoes must be cut carefully so that each piece would have the proper eyes for sprouting. But he went at them regardless of eyes or sprouts, hacking right and left with such fierceness that it seemed as though he were taking vengeance on the potatoes for some great wrong that they had done him. The farmer came up softly behind the boy; the violence of the latter's movements had made him suspect that the work was not being done as carefully as it should be.

"What are you doing?" he said suddenly, right behind the boy's chair.

Renti sprang up in alarm, upsetting the basket with all the uncut potatoes, and these rolled down into a cistern that the farmer had just uncovered, all but a few disappearing in the hole.

Then Renti began to recover his senses, for he had been sitting as if in delirium. He had not meant to spoil the potatoes, but had simply not thought anything about what he was cutting them for, and it relieved his feelings to chop them with all his might.

"A pretty mess you 've made!" said the farmer angrily, as he contemplated the few small potatoes that were left. "You are more expense to me than you are worth. This comes of having your thoughts always on vagabonding. But you 're not going to stir a step from the house, — you may count on that. Struggle as you please, you will finally learn to be patient."

These words made Renti feel as though the farmer had fastened a chain to him and bound him down. After that he grew more restless and more erratic than ever. He was continually looking about for some way of escape, and whatever he did was so carelessly done that the farmer more than once took him by the ear and said, "Careful, careful! This can't go on much longer."

On Saturday evening, at milking time, the farmer went into the barn, with Renti following as usual.

"You have n't brought back the bucket since it was scrubbed at the well," he said impatiently; for he had already tied the cow's tail so that she would not switch it in his face while he was milking. "Run and fetch it, and be quick!"

Renti ran out. Once outside the door he flew like an arrow over the fields. A few moments afterward the farmer rose from his milking stool, where he had been sitting waiting, and went to the door. The well was just outside: there stood the bucket, upside down, as it had been left to dry, and Renti was nowhere in sight.

"Tricky little scamp! This is the last I 'll have of you!" muttered the farmer in rage, as he went out to get the bucket.

Renti ran without stopping until he reached the path leading to Lindenhof. Then he paused; he happened to think that it was just the time when the men would be busy about the stables. So he turned about and ran toward The Alders.

"Renti, Renti! wait!" he heard a voice calling behind him. He turned about and saw Gretchen coming toward him with smiling face. She was very glad to see Renti once more and wanted to hear from him that he was getting on well in the new place and that everything was going to turn out happily, — for this was what she confidently expected to hear.

But when she came up with him and looked into his face she said in alarm, "Renti, what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing," was the answer.

"But you are so changed. Are you out on an errand? Were you coming to our house?"

"No."

"You haven't run away again, Renti, have you?"

Gretchen looked at him in distress.

"Yes, I have."

Gretchen grew pale.

"Oh, oh! now you are doing it again, and everything will go wrong! What will the farmer do to you when you go back?"

"I don't care what he does. I'd like to chop down all his trees!"

That seemed to Renti the most awful injury that one could do to an enemy. He had once heard of a servant who, in a fit of anger, had cut down his master's tree, and Renti remembered what a dreadful impression this had made on every one; for a fine old tree, that has stood from one generation to another, giving its yearly offering of fruit, is looked upon with special reverence by the farmers. Renti uttered this hideous wish with clinched fists and set teeth.

Gretchen was very sad. "I never saw you like this, Renti. You are surely getting bad again," she wailed, "and everybody will turn against you, and there won't be any possible help for you."

"No; no help at all," groaned Renti.

The church bell sounded for evening prayers.

"I must go home," said Gretchen hastily. "Our happy days are over. Good night, Renti."

"Yes; and all my life long I can have no more pleasure. Good night, Gretchen."

Renti ran across the fields toward Lindenhof, and Gretchen went her way with a sad heart.

On the following day, a bright Sunday in spring, when all the fields lay smiling and sparkling, Gretchen stood at the corner of the house and would not go in to dinner, for she feared that now they all knew that Renti had been running away again; and what would her father and brothers say? Her mother called a second time and she reluctantly went into the house.

She was not kept long in suspense. As soon as her father had laid down his soup spoon, he said: "Well, now it 's over with Renti. I heard to-day at church that he had been sent away from Brook Farm. The farmer says he cannot keep him because he is good for nothing, and that it would be useless for any one else to try him."

"But where will he go, father?" asked Gretchen timidly.

"Perhaps they will take him to the poorhouse, as they did Yoggi, the idiot boy. There he will be mastered," Hannes informed her with a triumphant air. "They won't expect him to work, but if he does n't stop running away they will tie him down until he grows tame."

"It 's what he deserves," declared Uli, with self-righteous assurance.

"I am really disappointed in the boy," said the mother. "I was always fond of him and hoped he would turn out a good boy in time; but if he does n't behave anywhere, it is a bad sign and shows there must be something wrong with him."

Gretchen could hardly keep back her tears. Everybody was against him now, even her mother, and she dared not say a word in his behalf. Then when she remembered how strangely he had behaved the evening before, she grew more and more troubled, and thought that perhaps he had really fallen into evil ways. And she could not help him, and no one else could help him. She could hardly choke down the last mouthful, and left the table before dinner was over, asking permission to go out.

"Yes, but do not stay out late," her mother said, as she always did.

Gretchen ran up to the pasture, where it was quiet, and where very few people ever came. When she reached the stone wall she sat down under the shade of the alders and thought over the whole matter about Renti, — how he seemed to be going from bad to worse and how hopeless everything seemed. The tears that she had held back so long began to flow down her cheeks, and while the birds in the alder tree were singing their merriest songs she sat underneath and wept as though her heart would break.

Presently she heard some one approaching; she dried her tears and kept very quiet. Looking down over the meadow, she saw the pastor coming toward her. On Sunday afternoons he often took this walk up the hill to enjoy the fine view one got from there over the surrounding country.

Seeing Gretchen sitting all alone on the stone wall, he stopped in surprise and spoke to her. She arose at once and gave him her hand. He looked at her in silence for a moment; then, patting her shoulder in a friendly way, he said: "Gretchen, Gretchen, what is the matter with your bright eyes? Don't you hear the birds singing and giving thanks for this beautiful Sunday?"

"Yes, Herr Pastor, I hear them."

"And can you not be happy with them?"

"No, I cannot," she said in a voice that was almost a sob.

"Are you in trouble, Gretchen? Come, tell me about it. Can't you?"

Gretchen for a moment made no reply; then she said in a low voice, "No."

"I think I understand," said the pastor sympathetically. "Sometimes things will happen that we don't care to talk about, — some little difference with brothers, or some misunderstanding at home. It frets and grieves us, because we see no way of ever straightening it out and being happy again; but, Gretchen, don't you remember the lines you recited in Sunday school a week ago?"

"Yes, Herr Pastor," answered the child without trepidation; for she was not one of those who learned her verses the last minute before Sunday school and then forgot them as soon as she was out of church. She studied them carefully and conscientiously, so that she would be sure of not breaking down in church.

"Won't you come here and say them for me now?"

The pastor seated himself on the wall and motioned Gretchen to a seat beside him. She willingly obeyed, and clasping her hands she said with reverent air:

"Sing, pray, walk in His way,
Do your work as for the Lord;
He will help you when the world
Naught of comfort can afford.
For if your faith be sure,
And your courage endure,
God will be your friend."

"That is very good; but have you ever thought what the poem means, Gretchen?" asked the pastor.

"I have repeated it ever so many times, so that I could say it without stumbling," said Gretchen.

"You have learned it very well indeed," said the pastor; "but I mean something more than that. Let us see what it says: 'Sing,' — that is, be happy like the birds, and do not lose courage or hang your head; 'pray,' — that you must do to keep happy. 'Do your work as for the Lord,' and you will feel that God is with you, and will help you when no one else in the world can. Now think about it, Gretchen. And good-by."

Smilingly the pastor held out his hand to the child, and then went on up the hill.

Gretchen had listened with deep attention to all that he had said, and now as she sat thinking of his words a great weight seemed to be lifting from her heart: she had found comfort. She would do

just as the pastor had said; and she repeated the poem again, slowly and thoughtfully, trying to remember all that he had told her. When she reached the last lines she said them out loud joyously and confidently:

"For if your faith be sure,
And your courage endure,
God will be your friend."

Then she heard the birds singing in the alder trees, and she suddenly felt like joining in their song. The evening sun was spreading its golden light over the meadow, and Gretchen saw that it was time to go home. She jumped from the wall and walked down the hill toward home, singing a happy song as she went.

CHAPTER V

HOW RENTI LEARNS A MOTTO

The alms commissioner had tried hard to have them keep Renti awhile longer at Brook Farm, for he did not know what else to do with the boy. There was no room for him in the poorhouse, and since everybody declared him utterly useless for work, there was no prospect of finding another place for him. The parish was not willing to pay for him in the summer, as it did through the winter. The farmer at first vowed he would have nothing more to do with the boy, but at last consented to keep him a week or two longer. The field work would be increasing throughout the summer, and perhaps after a while a place would be found for Renti, — if not in Buschweil, where everybody knew the boy, then perhaps in some neighboring parish.

So for the present Renti remained at Brook Farm; but he had a miserable time of it, for the farmer was harsh toward him for having succeeded

in running away on the Saturday before in spite of all his vigilance. Nor did Renti improve in his work; so he got nothing but harsh words, and he grew uglier every day.

The season was an exceptionally bright and sunny one, so the spring work could be carried on without interruption. The farmers who had plenty of help might count on a rich harvest, for they were able to get their seeds in early, and the warm sun promised rapid growth.

The last farm in the parish of Buschweil was Stony Acre. In fact, it lay partly in the next parish, but the family came to church in Buschweil. They lived a stern, arduous life at Stony Acre. From early morning till late at night the farmer, with his five sons and two hired men, were abroad plowing and sowing, while the wife went out into the bean field, with a maidservant and a day laborer, and superintended the digging of holes and the planting of the beans. When noon came she would hurry home, get dinner, then run to the stables and feed the stock, and then out into the bean field again; and so on all day long without stopping, for she was known to have more energy and endurance than any other woman in the community.

But "to be everywhere at the same time is impossible," she said to her husband one evening.

"I must have a boy. When you begin work in the outlying fields and can't come home to dinner, how shall I cook the meals and carry them out to you, and at the same time be here to feed the cattle and look after the house?"

"Get a boy," said the farmer. "Choose one yourself and you will be better satisfied."

But there was little choice for her. Far and near there was not a boy to be had except Renti, and he had the reputation of being so stubborn and ugly that no one could manage him.

"Indeed!" said the woman when this was told her; "I'd like to see the boy I couldn't manage. I've brought many an older one to terms, and we'll see how long it takes to make this youngster toe the mark."

She immediately sent word to Brook Farm that she needed a boy and that they might send Renti.

When people heard that the boy was to go to Stony Acre they said that this was the last chance of his ever amounting to anything, for if any one in the world could discipline him, this woman could. She had tamed many a wild fellow, and if anything could be done with Renti, she was the one to do it.

Renti presented himself on the same day that he was sent for. The woman happened to be all alone that afternoon, and was sitting out in front of the

house picking over seed peas. Beside her lay a big watchdog, who growled at the slightest noise and sprang up barking furiously when Renti appeared.

"Be quiet!" the woman commanded him. Then turning to Renti, she said: "Come this way. He will not hurt you if you do nothing wrong. It is fortunate that I have this opportunity of speaking to you quietly before the others come, for I have something to say to you. You see I 've heard about your tricks, my boy, so you must not try any of them here, for the first time you run away you 'll get a thrashing such as you never dreamed of. What do you say to that?"

"Nothing," said Renti in stubborn tones.

"Nothing? You mean to defy me? What did you do before when you got a good thrashing for running away?"

"I ran away again the next day."

"Indeed? Then that was all the good it did? Well, I know something better that will surely cure you." The woman called to the dog, — "Nero!" — and pointing her finger at Renti, said, "Watch!"

The dog growled angrily and made a dash at the boy; but the woman held him by the collar, and Renti shrank back in alarm.

"I see you understand," the woman said to Renti. "Now the dog has learned his lesson, and

hereafter, when you carry dinner out into the fields, or go on the slightest errand, he will go with you; for I can't be watching you — I have other things to do. If you make any attempt to get away, the dog will understand instantly, you may depend upon it. He will seize you by the neck, and if he wanted to kill you, there would be no help for you. Do you think you understand?"

"Yes," answered the boy in timid tones, for he trembled at the thought of his fierce guard.

"Now as to your work. If you do your tasks properly, all will be well; if not, remember that I have taken others by the ears. So make your plans accordingly."

After these preliminaries the woman told him what his duties would be. That very evening he was sent out to the fields with supper for the men, and the dog went with him, never for a moment stirring from his side. Renti saw that there would be no more chance of running away.

The following week was a hard one for the boy. But he himself had now grown hard. He never was so stubborn before. At Lindenhof he had never felt like being insolent; but now, when the woman would say to him, "Why do you stand there staring into space? why don't you go on with your work?" he would answer sullenly, "Because."

And when she called out to him, "Be quick, or I will come and help you!" he would say, "Who cares!"

One day, when she had set him to weeding the garden, he went about it so fiercely that she stopped to watch him. He drove his hoe into the ground so hard that he could scarcely pull it out, thus giving vent to his inner rage. She called to him to be careful, or he might be sorry. He muttered angrily that he did n't care what happened.

More than once he was taken by the ears for his saucy answers. It was a week full of secret rage on the boy's part, and of indignation and angry outbursts on the woman's part.

On Sunday morning after church, when her acquaintances gathered about her, all anxious to hear how she was getting on with the boy, she exclaimed over and over: "He drives me frantic! I don't wonder that no one would take him. Such a sulky, impudent rascal — you would n't believe it unless you heard him. And his work does n't amount to anything. But I will not give in until I master him."

Then the women all agreed among themselves, "He must be a bad one," and told their husbands when they got home, "If she succeeds in bringing him to time it will be a miracle."

In the afternoon Renti was told to carry some tools that needed repairing down to the smithy. "As it is Sunday, you may stay out until five o'clock; but see that you get home in time. If you are not here at five, you will regret it."

Renti took the tools and went. He had but to leave them at the smithy, so that they might be repaired in the morning, and thus no precious time would be taken from the working hours for this errand.

Ridding himself of his load as quickly as possible, Renti was off and away into the sunny afternoon. He would go and visit the pasture once more, and the little stone wall, and the alder trees. While he was yet at a distance he saw that Gretchen was sitting on the wall. As soon as she saw him she came running eagerly toward him.

"How nice that you have come once again!" she called to him. "It is so long since I have heard anything of you! It is Sunday, and you could come to-day without running away, so we will be happy all the afternoon."

They had reached the wall; Gretchen seated herself upon it, and Renti stood before her.

"No, I did not run away," he said sullenly; "but at five I am to be back. I won't do it, though; the dog isn't here, and I won't go home until dark; I don't care what happens."

"O Renti! are you beginning your bad ways again?" wailed Gretchen. "They said that at Stony Acre you might be made to behave; but now you mean to disobey your mistress, and you will get a whipping, and everything will be as bad as before."

"It has been all the time," Renti replied, casting wild looks about, and growing more and more violent in his speech as he proceeded. "If she wants to thrash me, I don't care; and if she wants to pound me to death, so much the better. It's all over with me anyway. If I could only chop down every tree on her whole farm!"

"O Renti, Renti! do not say such things!" cried Gretchen in terror; for she saw in imagination the hideous wish fulfilled, and all the beautiful trees lying prone upon the ground. "If you yield to your temper in this way, you will grow worse and worse, and finally — yes, Renti, father said that if you did not mend your ways it would go hard with you. Oh, if you could only be good again, as you used to be!" And Gretchen covered her face with both hands and broke out into bitter weeping.

Renti threw himself on the ground, moaning: "I can't be good any more; I don't know how, and there isn't any hope for me, and I'd like to die this minute!"

Then Gretchen dried her eyes and said earnestly: "There is help for you. If you had faith, and would pray, you would feel at once that God was your friend."

"But how can God help me?" groaned Renti, with his face still buried in the ground.

"I don't know, but I'm sure the dear God knows, and if *he* would help you, you might be good again, as you used to be, Renti. Oh, I can't bear to see you so changed! Do, for my sake, Renti," pleaded Gretchen, entreatingly; "do try to be good! Then we shall all be happy again."

"Then I will," said Renti, rising from the ground; "if you won't cry any more, and won't be angry with me for having been so bad."

"No, indeed; indeed, I won't!" Gretchen assured him. "But I was n't angry, Renti; I was only sad; and if you will do now as you have promised, what good times we shall have!"

"Do you really think so?" Renti asked doubtfully, for he could think of nothing that would ever make him happy again. "But, Gretchen," he said after a moment's reflection, "what can I do for my mistress to make things come as you say?"

"You must obey at once when she speaks to you, and you must do your work properly. You know very well how it should be done, if you only

keep your wits about you. And whenever bad thoughts come into your head about running away and about chopping down trees, you must pray. Then the dear God will help you when there is no other comfort. You know the poem says:

"For if your faith be sure,
And your courage endure,
God will be your friend."

Renti listened attentively to all that Gretchen said. After thinking the matter over, he said resolutely, "Yes, I will try; but will you come here to the stone wall next Sunday afternoon, so that I can tell you how I have succeeded?"

"Yes, I will come," Gretchen promised him; "but you must not come unless you have permission, else you will spoil it all again. Now you must go home; it struck four a long time ago."

Renti had heard it and knew that it was time to go, but he thought he could stay until Gretchen gave warning. Wishing to show that he was in earnest about his promise, he immediately held out his hand to her and said, "Good-by." Then he ran down across the meadow as fast as he could, and never paused until he found himself at Stony Acre.

When his mistress saw him she said: "It 's well that you did n't try to play any of your tricks to-day. Nero was ready to go after you."

CHAPTER VI

ALL BUSCHWEIL IS AMAZED

Monday came, and the work of another week began.

"I wonder what has got into the boy now!" said the housewife, casting suspicious glances at Renti several times during the day. On Tuesday it was the same, and the woman at length exclaimed: "What can be going on in his head? I don't know what to make of him."

Renti never answered a word. He gave no more saucy retorts; his impudence was gone; but he looked as though he were being crushed to the earth by some awful burden. He had to struggle continually to keep his promise. To do at once as he was told, to practice self-control, to keep back saucy answers, required such exertion on his part that his head was bent low under the strain and he hardly saw what was going on about him. Then it was very difficult, too, to keep his thoughts upon

his work, so that he could do it properly, for he had to pray away the temptations to do bad things. What prayer could he think of quick enough to conquer them? Then he remembered Gretchen's verses, and whenever bad thoughts threatened to rise he would say:

"For if your faith be sure,
And your courage endure,
God will be your friend."

But sometimes the thoughts rushed over him so suddenly that in his excitement he could not remember the verse, and he would have to stop and think and at the same time keep on with his work. All this was such a strain upon the boy that he grew pale and lost his appetite.

"He is an artful hypocrite," said the woman, when Wednesday came and Renti continued as he had begun on Monday. "If I could only make out what it is he's plotting. I have conquered many another fellow, but I never saw one like him."

When Renti continued the same on Thursday and Friday, keeping his eyes on the ground, speaking never a word, and growing paler and paler, the woman stopped scolding. She began to feel queer about the boy. She watched him anxiously from the corner of her eye, as though she were in

constant fear of some new outbreak. On Saturday Renti scarcely tasted food; and then a hideous thought occurred to her: What if the boy had eaten some of the rat poison from the kitchen cupboard!

She immediately began questioning him: "Do you feel sick? Answer quickly! Have you pain?"

"No," said the boy, without lifting his head; he was still struggling.

"There is something uncanny about him. Perhaps he is a vampire!" she thought, in sudden terror. She had once heard of a person whom no one dared to look upon because he was a vampire. "I wish I had never laid eyes on the boy!" she exclaimed, incensed at her own weakness; and she darted about all day as though driven by an evil spirit. For the first time in her life she felt helpless. The idea of not being able to master a young boy seemed absurd, but she was really so uncomfortable about him that she would much rather have had nothing more to do with him. She would go to church to-morrow, at any rate, and tell her friends what a time she was having, and what a strain it was on one's patience. That would be some relief, she thought.

As soon as church was out a group of people gathered about her, all curious to hear how she was getting on with the boy.

Then she poured forth her tale, growing quite breathless in the eagerness of her telling. "Yes, yes; if you only knew him! He is deep, I can tell you. Control him? If you could do that, you could work miracles. Since Monday he has taken a new turn. Now he does n't say a word, — gives no answer, but hangs his head to the ground and broods all day. What he may be hatching out will come to light soon enough. Of course we can't tell what it may be; but," she continued, with a mysterious nodding of the head, "there is something queer about the boy. I will not say what I think. You will find out for yourselves."

At that the mistress of Lindenhof stepped forth from the group, and, confronting the woman of Stony Acre, said in distinct tones that were heard by all those present: "I want to say a few words in this matter. A week ago the complaint against the boy was that he gave back saucy answers and was insolent in his speech; to-day it is that he gives no answer and says nothing. So I should like to ask what he could do to be satisfactory? It seems to me that if the boy is getting so bad, there must be some cause in the treatment he receives."

The mistress of Stony Acre started up as though a wasp had stung her. "In my opinion," she replied

angrily, "it is much easier to send away a boy when he grows troublesome than it is to take one whom no one else wants. What do you think?"

The woman of Lindenhof answered in calm and measured tones: "It was not on account of his behavior that I sent the boy away, but simply because we had made other arrangements about our help. As long as Renti was with us he was a good boy, and I should not mind taking him back this very day."

"Indeed!" said her angry opponent. "Words are cheap and make a good sound. Many another mistress would find it best to 'make other arrangements' to get rid of such a boy."

Then the other held up her head stiffly and said, as she looked the angry woman squarely in the face: "I am ready to stand by my words. Here before these people I say that I am not afraid to take the boy back into my house; and I will prove it." With that she passed out of the group and went away.

"She means what she says; she will do it," said one woman. Another said: "I am curious to see how the affair will turn out. Do you think she will master him?"

The excitement over the matter grew, and partisanship for and against the contestants drew forth

many different opinions. Some said, "She of Lindenhof will never do it; she will leave the boy where he is." Others said, "If she does take him, she will get rid of him before long; for if he is too much for the woman of Stony Acre, he will never be conquered by her of Lindenhof."

The wives all went home so excited that their husbands became interested, too, and in all Buschweil that day people were talking of the probable outcome of the matter between Renti and the two women who had quarreled over him.

Gretchen's mother alone of all the women had not stopped after church, but had gone directly home with the rest of her family; so at The Alders they knew nothing of the occurrence.

The mistress of Stony Acre came home in a bad mood; the encounter had been extremely irritating to her. Never before had she been accused of treating her servants badly. How dared any one suggest such a thing to her?

The first person she saw on entering the house was Renti. He was sitting on a stool in the kitchen paring potatoes, as she had directed him to do. All the morning he had had but one thought, which he had been turning over and over in his mind,—that this afternoon he was going to find Gretchen by the stone wall, and tell her how obedient he had been

all the week and how hard he had tried to do right, and she would surely be very much pleased.

"You are not going to stir a step from the house to-day," the woman exclaimed as she entered the room. "You went last Sunday, and I 'm sure your vagabonding did you no good."

It was a hard blow for Renti. All through his struggles during the week he had looked forward to Sunday afternoon; and now — he must stay at home and face another long week like the last one. At the thought a sudden flame of anger blazed up within him and he muttered between his clinched teeth, "What you deserve is to have all your trees and your house and your barn and your cattle" — "chopped down," he was about to say; but suddenly he saw Gretchen before him and remembered how she had wept and entreated. He made a tremendous effort, struggling as never before to recall his verse, and then finally, when it came to him, saying it over and over, —

> "For if your faith be sure,
> And your courage endure,
> God will be your friend," —

until the evil thoughts were banished.

When the afternoon sun lay bright and pleasant on the meadows the mistress of Lindenhof stepped forth in Sunday array from her door. She stopped

on her way through the garden to pick a fine red carnation, and with this in her hand she went out into the road, and then across the fields. Her face showed that many thoughts were at work in her mind. She realized that the errand before her was one of consequence. She had involved herself that morning in something for which she had not planned; but one word had led to another, until she had at last committed herself to a statement that she did not want to take back,—for she always stood by her word. When she told her husband of what had happened, he agreed with her entirely, and said: "Of course you must take the boy. If he proves too much of a trial, we will send him to our son-in-law, who is young and strong and has several hired men, and among them they will manage the boy. I will gladly let them have the fruit of one or two of our trees in the fall to make up for it, rather than to have noise and wrangling in the house."

The wife thought this all over, but the calm serenity with which she usually ended her reflections was not within her reach to-day. She could not dispose of the problem so easily as her husband had, for she had made up her mind to keep the boy, no matter how wild, or lazy, or unmanageable he might be. The woman of Stony Acre should not have the satisfaction of seeing her defeated; nor did she

wish it said by the other women that she made statements that she could not carry out.

But if the boy had really grown so wild and stubborn, what would become of the peace of her home, and her quiet, orderly life? This thought made her uncomfortable, for she disliked harsh words and rude manners; they were unknown in her household. When she thought of Renti, however, and of what a good boy he had formerly been, she said to herself: "He cannot be altogether bad. He is still young, and God willing we will make something of him yet. Kindness and reason will accomplish a great deal."

She had now reached Stony Acre. As she entered the living room she saw that the housewife was sitting alone; the other members of the family were all out. Some had not come home and others were in the stables feeding the stock.

"Ah!" said the hostess stiffly; "it is an uncommon honor to see you here. Will you sit down?"

"I have come to keep my word," answered the visitor in firm tones, without noticing the proffered seat.

"Indeed? You are in earnest?" And the hostess tried to twist her mouth into a smile. "The boy is in the barn; I will call him." She went toward the barn, the other woman following her.

Upon hearing his name called, Renti appeared in the barn door. When he saw the mistress of Lindenhof he started impulsively toward her, but suddenly checked himself, and hanging his head came slowly forward; for his first joy at seeing the mistress with whom he had once been so happy immediately gave place to the conviction that she must be angry with him, as everybody else was, for having been so bad. She had noticed his start of joy, however, and now held out her hand toward him smilingly and said, "Come, Renti; you need not be afraid."

"He probably has good reason for being afraid," said the woman of Stony Acre sharply.

He felt that he had indeed, and his head dropped lower and lower. The visitor watched him closely.

"Renti," she said, "what do you say to going home with me?"

Renti's head went up at that; he thought he was to take a walk to Lindenhof, and that would be fine. But his mistress had forbidden him to go away to-day. He looked at her questioningly; she said nothing.

"Well, get your bundle and we will be off," said the visitor.

Renti looked up with wide eyes.

"Do you mean — to live?" he said at length, hesitatingly.

"Yes, yes; that 's what I mean," she assured him.

A look of joy shot into his eyes that touched the woman's heart.

"How glad he seems to go with me!" she thought with pleasure.

Renti darted away to fetch his bundle, and in a very few minutes was back with it; he had little to pack.

"There is nothing more to arrange, I think," said the visitor.

"Nothing," answered the hostess shortly. "I wish you joy."

But the woman of Lindenhof paused. "Renti," she said, "don't you want to tell your master 'God keep you'?"

"It is not necessary," said the other woman.

But Renti had been accustomed to obey his former mistress on the instant, and when she spoke he immediately ran to the barn. Returning in a moment, he made his adieus to the wife. They were short; she did not desire many words.

Then Renti walked along beside his old mistress toward Lindenhof. He was making the journey this time with a clear conscience, and before him

lay the prospect, not of a few anxious, homesick hours, but of the old happy life. He was to stay there, live there, be at home once more in the dear place. He could hardly realize such happiness. Every now and then he would look up at the woman to see whether it could really be true. She was going her way silently; she was again busy with her thoughts. So far the matter had turned out quite differently from her expectations. Could the boy be merely playing a part, she wondered, and would he show himself in quite another light when it came to working and doing as he was told?

There was nothing saucy, nothing obstinate, nothing uncanny about him, so far as she could see. He seemed to be just the same cheerful, willing little fellow that she had always known. But his blouse was very shabby and his little trousers most disreputable looking for Sunday, and his whole appearance was not clean and well kept, as it had formerly been.

"Renti," she said, looking him over, "are these your Sunday clothes?"

"Yes," he answered, blushing; "in the bundle I have only torn ones. I have been wearing these on Sundays and week days, too, for a long time."

"That blouse looks to me like the very one I gave you for your Sunday suit. Have you had nothing new since then?"

"No, this is all I have," said Renti meekly; for he thought the woman was displeased with him for the way he looked.

"It is not your fault," she said, noticing his embarrassment. "But now, Renti, you mean to obey me, and to do what is right, don't you?"

"Yes, yes; indeed I do!" said Renti, smiling up at her with the old honest look in his face. His words, too, sounded so hearty and natural that the woman could only wonder more and more.

When they came within sight of Lindenhof Renti's eyes sparkled. "There is the roof!" he cried. "Do you really mean that I am to stay here again?"

"The staying depends very much upon you, Renti; but if you walk so fast I cannot keep up with you."

The boy could hardly hold back his steps as they approached the house. Suddenly he asked: "May I run up to the alder meadow for a moment? I will come right back."

The woman looked at him sharply. "Renti," she said, "you aren't thinking of running away already, are you?"

"Oh, no; I am here now, you see. Where could I run?" he said with a happy smile.

The woman shook her head as though she did not understand. "What do you want in the alder meadow?"

"Only to run over and tell Gretchen about it; then I will come right back."

"Then run," she said in kindly tones; but it all seemed most extraordinary to her.

Renti ran as fast as he could. Gretchen was still sitting on the wall, but she looked sad, for she thought Renti was not coming; perhaps he was in trouble again.

"Gretchen, Gretchen!" she suddenly heard him call. He was running toward her, waving his arms in the air and calling excitedly, "Gretchen, Gretchen! I am at home again!"

Gretchen had not the slightest idea what he meant, but she ran toward him eagerly. When they met, Renti was so excited and so happy that he could hardly tell his story; he had to shout aloud, turn somersaults, and leap into the air for a while. When Gretchen finally began to understand that Renti's old mistress had gone to get him and that he was now to live at Lindenhof again, she also broke forth into shouts of joy, and cried out again and again: "O Renti! now we shall be happy as we used to be. And you will be here for the herding! Oh, I am so glad, so glad! I have been thinking how sad it would be when I had to come to pasture all alone, and you were far away herding other cows. But now we'll be together again." And

at the thought they both became so hilarious that the neighboring hills entered into their joy and repeated the merry shouts.

"Renti," said Gretchen suddenly, in thoughtful tones, — she always was a meditative little Gretchen, — "why was it that the mistress of Lindenhof so suddenly took your part, when all the other people said they did not want you because you were good for nothing? It could not have been on account of the work that she took you."

"No, I don't believe it was," said Renti rather shamefacedly; "but I don't know what other reason she could have had."

Then Gretchen said earnestly: "Renti, I believe that God put it into her mind to go and bring you home. I have been praying to him every day; for though I saw no way out of your troubles, I trusted God, and knew that he would find a way to help you."

"Oh, there is something I have not told you!" exclaimed Renti. "I kept my promise all the week about praying away the bad words and evil thoughts when they tried to arise, and kept saying over and over,

"For if your faith be sure,
And your courage endure,
God will be your friend."

"And see how it has come true! We trusted God and he has given us our reward," said Gretchen joyfully.

Now it was Renti's turn to look thoughtful. Suddenly he said, "I had n't thought of that before," — for he had been saying the verse merely as a remedy against bad words and thoughts, without thinking much about its meaning; but now he began to understand that God was ready, if one turned to him, to do a great deal more than one really asked of him.

These meditations kept Renti very thoughtful for a while; then he suddenly realized that it was time for him to go, and he hastily bade Gretchen good night and started down the hill.

"Good night, Renti!" she called after him happily, and they went their separate ways.

As Renti neared the house he broke forth into a loud, ringing yodel.

"That does n't sound like a sneaking hypocrite," said the farmer's wife to herself, as she passed through the garden. Before she reached the door Renti was by her side.

"May I run out to the barn a moment?" he asked.

"I am willing," the woman answered.

Renti darted off toward the stables, and going up to Brindle's stall put his arms about her neck

and said, "Brindle, dear Brindle, do you know me?" And Brindle answered so lustily that all the other cows joined in, and Renti received a welcome that made the rafters tremble.

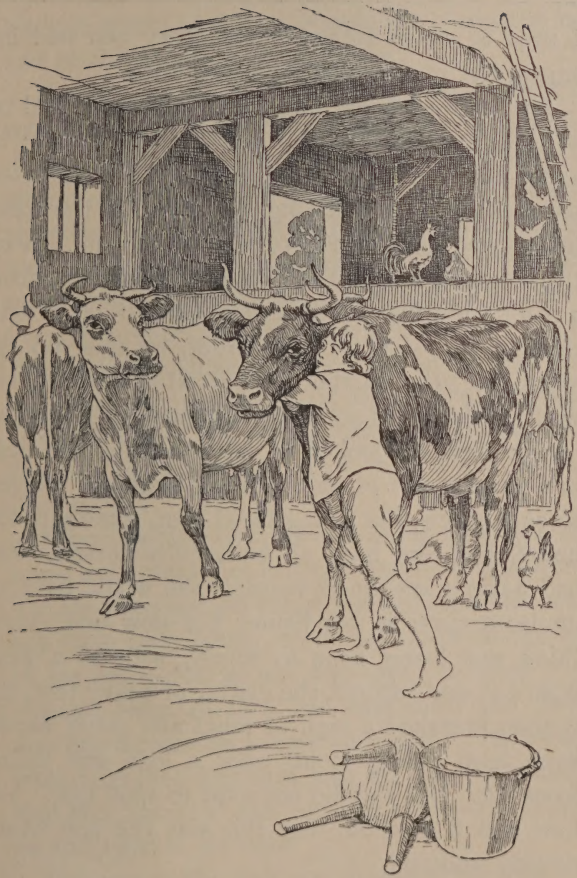
Then he went up to the hayloft, and from there climbed still higher to the upper floor. Here he scrambled around in all the corners, and when he came down he had his cap full of eggs.

When he entered the kitchen the housewife was at her usual evening duties. Seeing him she stopped and exclaimed, "Where did you find so many fine eggs?"

"In the barn," said Renti with shining eyes. "Look at these! and these! Here are Brown Betty's, and here are Snow White's, and these are from the speckled Bobtail, and these from the two young hens. What fine ones!" And Renti laid them all out on the table, as eager and interested as though they were all his own property.

"Now look at that!" exclaimed the woman, viewing the collection admiringly. "Andrew has been telling me all along that my hens were not good layers; and I always had the best hens in the parish. The trouble has simply been that he did not know where to look for the eggs. How did you know where to find them, Renti?"

"I have always known," said Renti; "and I know of other nests that I have not searched yet.



I used to watch to see where every hen laid her eggs. But now I must fetch the wood."

And he went eagerly to work, running to and fro as swift as a weasel. He asked no questions; he knew just what had to be done. When the wood box was full to overflowing, he picked up the water bucket and filled all the vessels to the brim. After that he brought out shoe brushes and blacking from a box on the floor, and seating himself on a little three-legged stool in the corner, he took up the shoes, one after another, that stood in a row by the wall, brushing and polishing them with all his might.

The mistress looked at him, shaking her head in a puzzled sort of way, and said nothing. Never, since Andrew, the young hired man, came into the house, had she been so beautifully served. She had never complained, because she would have no unpleasantness in her home; but now that everything was being done so nicely, without a word from her and without the clatter of heavy feet, the woman breathed a sigh of relief and could hardly keep from telling Renti what a load was falling from her. But she did not want to spoil him. Yet how was it possible that this was the boy whom nobody wanted?

The farmer came home a little later than usual that day. He was somewhat nervous, for he thought

his wife would be full of complaints about the boy, and he did not want to hear them.

He was surprised to find, when he entered the room, that she had not a word of criticism, and that she did not look at all worried, and he sat down to his supper with a little sigh of relief. Again he was surprised to find how solicitous his wife was about keeping the boy's plate filled with good things, while Renti meanwhile was gazing about the room with beaming eyes, apparently finding new delight in every detail of the old Dutch stove, and dwelling on the gray purring cat as the most beautiful object in all the world.

After supper the woman said, "Renti, you know the way to your room. Your bed is just where it used to be."

When Renti found himself in his own dear little room once more his joy was complete, and he felt like shouting and yodeling; but of course that would not have been fitting, so he sat down on the edge of his bed — for he was too happy to sleep — and thought over all that had happened, and how it was that he was back here once more. He recalled what Gretchen had said, and he felt very thankful that the dear God had come to his help as soon as he had tried to do right.

Downstairs the man was saying to his wife, "He is not so bad as you expected, is he?"

Thereupon the wife broke forth into such expressions of joy and praise that the man listened in amazement and finally said: "Be on your guard. There must be something wrong about him, and you will probably discover it soon enough."

The wife said she would watch the boy carefully before she put her full trust in him. Her worst fear was that Renti had fallen into bad company and had in that way learned to run away, and that he might be misled again. She determined to keep him at home altogether for a week, so that she might know what he was about.

Monday came; from morning till evening Renti ran about, here and there, from one to another, helping now the farmer, now the wife, now the hired man. He knew just what was needed and what was to be done, for he knew the orderly, systematic work of the place, and was everywhere apt and as quick as a flash. His whole heart and mind were in the work, for he loved the dear familiar tasks; he was at home once more.

It was the same on Tuesday, on Wednesday, and on Thursday. The farmer seemed to have four hands; his work was done before he knew it. When he needed help anywhere Renti was immediately beside him, even before he called, ready for the next step in the work.

On Thursday the hired man said to his master: "I'd rather get along with just the boy. He is three times as quick as Andrew; he knows the work and is always willing; and even if Andrew has the advantage in strength, the little fellow makes up for it with his good sense and intelligence."

This was exactly what the farmer wanted; but he had been holding back to see how the boy would turn out, and whether he would show any bad tricks.

When the farmer spoke to his wife about the matter, she exclaimed: "Thank goodness! Now I shall be rid of those clumping feet in my kitchen. When I have the boy alone with me I feel as though I were in heaven."

But she had not yet satisfied herself in regard to the boy's companionship. So one evening when the other servants had gone to bed and the farmer was busy about his last duties in the barn, she called to the boy to come and sit down beside her at the table; she wanted to have a serious talk with him.

"Now be honest, Renti, and tell me where you used to spend your time when you ran away and went tramping. Tell me just exactly who was with you."

Renti was a little frightened to have his evil days thus brought up before him, and he said in a meek,

penitent voice: "I always ran straight home, back here to Lindenhof; and then I would sit out behind the barn, or I would go into the shed sometimes, when no one was looking, and would coax the hens to me. I used to stay with them a long time, and sometimes I climbed up in the barn where I could look down on the cows."

The woman scrutinized the boy closely without speaking. She knew he was telling the truth. Finally she said, "But, Renti, why did you never come in to see me, if you felt so?"

Renti hung his head and said: "On Sundays, when I might have come, I had been running away all the week, because I could not keep away from here; and then I thought you must be angry with me."

Now the woman began to understand her little friend. It was out of pure devotion to her and her house that the boy had fallen into evil ways. She must make amends to him; she was touched by the discovery she had made. What a load he had taken from her! She need fear no bad companions, no tempters, who would come after the boy to lure him away. Trickery and hidden malice were out of the question. And now she might dismiss forever the dread of having to send the boy away, thus letting the woman of Stony Acre triumph over her and

giving the other women a chance to express sympathy. Best of all, though, was the thought that she was going to have the nimble, happy, devoted little fellow to serve her again. She had always liked him and now felt more attached to him than ever.

"Renti," she said at last, with a voice full of emotion, "you must have no more fears. As long as I am at Lindenhof you shall have a home here."

A happier boy than Renti was that night could not have been found in all the parish of Buschweil.

And the farmer was so glad at the turn things had taken, and the way in which his work was being done, that he would stop in the fields to tell people all about his wife's wonderful achievement in making a model boy out of Renti. The hired man, who had always found Andrew too clumsy to be of much assistance, heard with satisfaction that the little fellow was now to be taken instead, and he went about telling people that his mistress had but to look at a boy and she could do anything with him.

So, before another Sunday came, everybody in Buschweil had heard the news and was talking about the way Renti had been reformed in one week. It sounded so improbable that most people rather doubted the truth of the report.

But the mistress of Lindenhof said that they would see on Sunday that she was not afraid to

appear with her boy. She fitted him out with new clothes from head to foot, finishing off with a little black cap that set off his bright face and dancing eyes most jauntily.

As Renti walked home from church beside his mistress, many a head was turned to look after them. "Can that be the boy whom no one wanted?" said one. Others said, "No one else in the world could have accomplished what she has with the boy." And all seemed pleased with her success.

The woman of Stony Acre alone did not care to talk about the wonder that had been wrought at Lindenhof. She walked straight home without once looking round. The other woman also went her way; she did not care to boast, or to be flattered for what she had done; she merely wanted people to know that Renti was not the good for nothing that they thought him. He should have his good name back, she said.

On the way home she fell in with the family from The Alders. They had heard the news and greeted Renti pleasantly when they saw him; but Gretchen was beaming with joy to find that he was now one of the very best looking boys in all the parish, and to know that, being part of a well-ordered household once more, he would henceforth come to school and to church regularly.

Since that day the lessons in Sunday school have had a new interest for the little girl. She has found out that the verses she learns may be of great help and comfort if one will try to think them out; and sometimes, when she is called upon for her old verse, a particular earnestness comes into her voice that makes some one mother say to another, as they come from church: "Gretchen's verses to-day did not sound like a mere recitation. It seemed as though she were saying the words especially to me, and for me, to give me comfort."

To Renti the words bring many memories that make him thoughtful and at the same very happy.

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